Sarah A. Mann.

The Story about the Bird. Page 259.

VIOLA;

OR, THE

TRIUMPHS OF LOVE AND FAITH.

A Tale of Plots and Counterplots.

BY

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VIOLA HASTINGS.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD MANSION-HOUSE.

In the year 18—, there stood upon the banks of the river Schuylkill, nearly opposite what is now the northern suburbs of the city of Philadelphia, an old-time mansion house, the property of one Pedro Torillo; and, at the time of which we write, occupied by himself and family.

The building was quite large, and was constructed of rough gray stone; and everything about it—walls, doors, windows, etc.—were of the most massive and substantial character. It stood upon an elevated piece of ground, and was approached from the direct road to the city of Philadelphia, by a broad and spacious, though tortuous avenue, at the entrance to which was the porter's lodge. From the public road the mansion was not visible, the surrounding forest completely concealing it from view. From the east side, the descent from the house—which faced to the

south—was by a steep hill, at the bottom of which the rippling Schuylkill flowed gently along. From the off-side of the river, and the opposite shore, the upper portions only of the mansion house were to be seen. From the narrow beach at the bottom of the hill, however, the whole of the east side of the house was pretty visible, the sight being only partly obscured by the trunks of the trees which lined the declivity. From the stream, or the opposite shore, the foliage of the trees, in summer, intervened to mar the view. In the winter the prospect was better. On the north and south ends, and on the west side, the small clearing, in the centre of which the building stood, was completely hemmed in by the primeval forest.

The mansion comprised one large building, constructed in the ancient castellated style; and a number of smaller ones, rather irregular in form and size, which had once served, in its more prosperous days, for barns, granaries, stables, etc. These latter were evidently, however, of far more modern construction than the principal building—which exhibited all the marks of a very ancient origin—and seemed to have been put up without any very great regard to either symmetry or effect. The eye could not fail to perceive, however, that the whole collection of buildings was admirably adapted, both in strength and construction, for defence. Whether they had ever been

the scene of warfare, we are not prepared to say. That they had not been immediately before, nor were after the date of this narrative, is certain; for not many years subsequent to the occurrence of those events which it is now our province to relate, the old building was razed to the ground.

As we have stated, the main building was large, and constructed of rough gray stone, which gave it the appearance of a rude fortification. And we doubt not but that such was the design of the original founder—a Spanish grandee, and the great grandfather of the present occupant—who fled his native country, and made his home in the then wilds of America, having rendered himself politically obnoxious to his own government.

The turrets of the house—or, more properly speaking, castle—which rose one above the other, were lofty; and though almost entirely concealed from outside observation, by the surrounding forest, they yet afforded to the occupants an excellent view of the city of Philadelphia, and the contiguous country.

The principal door of entrance, which was very large, massive, and deeply set in the wall, was reached by a flight of some half-a-dozen rough stone steps. The door opened into a spacious hall, and opposite it, at the north end, was a flight of heavy winding stairs, which communicated with the upper portions of the building. On either side of the hall, on the lower

floor, were the parlors, drawing-rooms, dining-room, kitchen, etc. The east wing of the building, facing the Schuylkill, consisted, on the second floor, of the dancing saloon, and on the third floor, of chambers. In the west wing was the chapel, the armory, the library, etc. The chapel was modelled after the style of the Romish Cathedrals, and was gorgeous in its images, and crosses, and showy trappings. The armory was well supplied with implements and munitions of war, sufficient to have armed and accoutered a whole regiment.

It had always been the custom with the proprietors of this ancient mansion house, to maintain within its walls a priest, whose exclusive duty it was to officiate in the little chapel on high-days and holy-days; and at other times to devote his attention to smoothing the way through purgatory, for those who, doubtless, very frequently needed his ghostly ministrations. That was, however, when the family was plentifully supplied with gold. The present proprietor—to whom, of course, the estate had descended by entailment, and to the share of whose eldest son it would fall at his death—possessed but a small modicum of the world's goods; and though quite as *good* a Catholic as his more fortunate predecessors—as will appear—he was compelled either to officiate himself—for he, too, kept up all the customs of the Holy Church—or be content with the occasional presence

of one of the fathers from the city. Sometimes, however, the chapel organ would peal forth wild and exultant strains, and the sonorous voice of some glib-tongued priest fill the little place with prayers and supplications, which were rather a mockery, than an offering to the Lord of Hosts.

More frequently, however, the old armory would ring with the clash of swords, or resound with the sharp crack of fire-arms ; and not unfrequently the dancing saloon would be filled with light and music, and echo to the shuffling of many feet.

For a few years prior to the opening of the present narrative, however, all these sounds and sights had gradually been heard and seen less ; until at length they ceased entirely. In consequence of the habitations being very scarce in the immediate vicinity of the old mansion house, the continuance or discontinuance of these things did not attract much attention, or create any very great degree of remark. Some, who noticed the change, wondered a little, and then thought no more of the matter.

With this description of the "great house," as it was then termed, we will turn now to those who occupied it ; the scheming, cheating, hypocritical, unscrupulous Jesuit—his dissipated, reckless, and deeply sinful son ; and the pure, innocent, gentle maiden, unsullied and stainless in word, thought and deed.

CHAPTER II.

VIOLA HASTINGS AND HER JESUIT UNCLE.

Pedro Torillo, the hereditary proprietor of the aforesaid estate, was, as we have already stated, of Spanish origin. Of his pedigree, or position, little more need be said. Of his appearance, character, and disposition, however, something further is demanded.

Imagine a man some sixty odd years of age, short of stature, reasonably stout, and of good general proportions; with a bend in the upper part of his body that always caused his head to project several inches too much forward, and which compelled him to look up under his eyebrows when he addressed a person who stood erect. The skin of his face and hands was of a saffron hue, dry, crisp, and much wrinkled. The entire top of his head was bald, while the gray hairs which lined his temples and the back part of his head, were long, spare and straggling. His eyes were small, black and piercing; and were surmounted by large, thick, and heavy gray eyebrows. Clad

always in sombre black, and in the ancient style—breeches, silk stockings, and silver buckled shoes—he was a man once seen to be forever remembered; though not probably with any very agreeable emotions.

With the estate, Pedro Torillo had also inherited the religion—if to call it so is not a misnomer—of his forefathers; and all their deep-seated and besotted hatred of the Protestants. His hot, Spanish blood, admitted of no modification of his feelings, and consequently he hated intensely, and with all his heart. Besides which, there was with him the greater inducement of impious oaths, and unhallowed obligations, such as only the iron tyranny of the Church of Rome is monstrous enough to impose on its followers. He was a Jesuit, too; and an uncompromising follower, in the temporal sense, especially in the footsteps of Ignatius Loyola.

Wonder not when we say he was a Jesuit! It is an erroneous conclusion people have formed that all Jesuits must necessarily be officiating priests. According to the books of the founder of that powerful organization—whose object was more to obtain temporal than spiritual power, though the latter was necessary to the former—the society of Jesus consists of those both in and out of orders.* The

* It was not contemplated to make the Society of Jesus a strictly religious one—nor is it so. Its founders had other objects in view, as well of a temporal as of a spiritual character; and therefore is the injunction given to its members

latter, however, are seldom known as such; and through them all necessary information is speedily and secretly obtained.

Unquestionably the Order of Jesus is the most secret, binding, and world-wide organization that was ever conceived. And Catholicism, aiming always at universal dominion, temporal and spiritual, finds in Jesuitism its principal, and most efficient co-laborer. The world is girdled by the Order; and there is not a spot but harbors its hidden emissaries. At the foot of every throne, and beneath the roof of every hut, figuratively speaking, there lurks a Jesuit spy.*

"*to live among other men as other men do.*" And why? That they might the better spy out the internal workings of men's thoughts and actions—the better plan out their schemes of aggrandizement and power. What a volume of deceit and treachery does that one simple charge unfold! And who doubts but that they do "live among other men as other men do?" unknown and unwatched, and therefore the more dangerous and the more to be feared.

Four classes, or degrees, compose the Society, the highest of which are priests; the second are styled coadjutors, *and are employed in matters either spiritual or temporal.* The third class is that of scholars—youths who, prior to entering the Jesuit school, assume three vows, and bind themselves to enter the service of the Society, if required. The fourth class—the lowest in their gradation—consists of novices. The term of the novitiate is two years, more or less, at the discretion of the Superior.

* In 1540, Paul III. officially recognized the Order; and from that time it continued to spread, until at length its power and influence grew to be almost fabulous. Within the space of a few years "Houses of the Order" were firmly established in Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Italy, Sicily and India, and even at that early day, beyond the limits of the Romish Church. The rapidity of its progress has ever been unequalled, and can only be accounted for by its

It is confidently asserted—and the declaration, at least, can easily be substantiated—that not many years since a Jesuit occupied for a considerable period the pulpit of an Episcopalian church in the city of New York, having designedly assumed a name and character to mislead those with whom he was associated.* Now if that man's object does not plainly

mysterious fascination, and the vail of religious bigotry and fanaticism which enveloped those portions of the globe where its course was most marked. At this time, too, colleges were organized in various parts of Europe. These institutions of learning were designed for the "religious and secular instruction of children, and for restoring a catholic belief among apostate nations." France, however, stood aloof; not from any dislike to the Society itself, but through fear that beneath the surface some Spanish plot might be concealed. Once convinced that its surmises were erroneous, and France rapidly grew to be the principal theatre of its exploits. As an evidence of the cunning of the Society, however, we would mention that even at that time, when the French nation was most determinedly set against the admission of Jesuitism on its soil, a prosperous and powerful college had been established, and was in full blast.

* The editor of the New York *National Magazine*, in an article which appeared a year or so since, headed—"A JESUIT IN AN AMERICAN PROTESTANT PULPIT," said :—

The respected correspondent who asks our authority for asserting that one of the predecessors of Dr. Tyng, in the rectorship of St. Georges, was a Jesuit in disguise, is referred to the life of the Rev. Dr. Milnor, by Rev. John S. Stone, published by the American Tract Society in 1848. At page 316 of that volume is an extract from Dr. Milnor's Journal while in England, of which the following is a copy :

"In the course of our conversation a curious fact was developed in relation to Dr. Kewley, *my predecessor in St. Georges.* Mr. Mayer said that he had seen him in Italy, and was well acquainted with him. He passes here by the name of Father Kewley ; but Mr. Mayer says he knows his true name to be Lawson. He has no doubt that Dr. Kewley was a *Jesuit during the whole time of his residence in America.*"

appear we are strangely mistaken. If he was not endeavoring to aid in some secret combination, what *could* have been his object?

In politics especially—for therein consists the secret of all power—Jesuitism has always sought to, and in Europe has generally succeeded in holding the winning hand. Its temporal power is the foundation stone of the whole vast superstructure, and the uppermost idea embodied in its laws. By that means it seeks to aid Catholicism in disseminating the religion—mockery! mockery!—of the idolatrous Church of the seven hills. And as in Europe, so here—as in times past, so now.

The Romish Church—let who will cry out, No—has a longing, avaricious eye fixed unwaveringly on this fair land of America; and in furtherance of this grasping desire, Jesuitism, the hand-maid of the Scarlet Woman,* has its members, its agents, and its spies, scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Who knows, indeed, but that here in our midst the "General" of the Order—he whom all, from the

* In 1537 the Society was reorganized at Venice. It then consisted of but nine persons, and for their better protection "it was resolved that they should present themselves before the sovereign pontiff, Paul III., proffering to the Apostolic See, themselves without condition—their bodies, souls, and utmost services, to be disposed of for the good of the Church, in whatever manner should be judged the most conducive to that end." The petition of the members was granted, and an unlimited license bestowed upon their conduct.

humble neophyte to the full degreed member, are sworn *blindly* and implicitly to obey—may be quartered? Who knows but that here in our very midst, this dangerous organization may hold its periodical gatherings, when are collected together its representatives and agents from all quarters of the globe? And who knows? who can fathom the plots and intrigues which are then and there concocted against the government, and the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus? We can but guess at them by watching and studying the course of human events. Of one thing, however, we may feel certain, and that is, that nothing good or wholesome for a liberal, enlightened, and Protestant Republic, ever emanated from the darkened soul of a Romish Jesuit.

Of this powerful and dangerous Order was Pedro Torillo; though but few, outside of the association, were familiar with the fact. In society he was affable, polite, and courteous; and to the observing eye, he frequently appeared far too much so. In his own house, however, when no prying eye was there to see and report his conduct, he, very often, gave full play to his violent, stubborn, and overbearing disposition. Even to those of his own class, who were beneath him, he was cruel and tyrannical to an extreme; while to his equals and superiors he was fawning, hypocritical, and sycophantic.

Just before the breaking out of the war of Inde-

pendence, Pedro, then quite a lad, departed on a visit to the land of his fathers. He did not return again to this country until the conclusion of peace, when he brought with him a Spanish wife, a very beautiful woman. While absent, his father—his only remaining parent—had died, and the estate came into his possession by entailment. His father, however, had left him little else, which Pedro, to his chagrin, soon discovered; for he was a youth addicted to every description of debauchery and dissipation. By gaming and chicanery, however, he managed for a number of years to replenish his consumptive coffers. As age began to creep over his head, he, in a measure, dropped these pursuits, and grew to be as we have already described him. It was at this time that he became associated with the Society of Jesus; though, as will be seen, he did not, in his zeal for the Church, overlook his own private personal ends. He rather blended the two together, and made it a common cause.

The fruit of his marriage was one son, who will figure somewhat conspicuously in this brief, but eventful narrative. The wife, however, disappeared very suddenly some few years after they had come to reside at the old mansion, and was never again heard of. Torillo gave out that the climate of this country was not good for her health, and she had gone home to her native land to reside with her people. This

story was generally credited, for Pedro, as we have remarked, was a very specious and plausible man. He could talk and act, when anything was to be gained, or any disagreeable impression corrected, above and beyond all suspicion.

Ferdinand Torillo, Pedro's son, was born some few months after the arrival of his parents on these shores. In consequence of the sudden and mysterious disappearance of his mother a few years later, he was early left to the sole guidance of his father, who gradually instilled into his mind a large proportion of his own villainous disposition and feelings. At the period to which we now have particular reference, Ferdinand was just entering his fortieth year, and it may be safely asserted that the general characteristics of his conduct and disposition were as like his father's, at the same age, as like could be. Quite prepossessing in his personal appearance, and finished in his deportment generally, few would ever have supposed him to be at bottom really so corrupt, unprincipled, and wicked. His Spanish origin was plainly discernible in his swarthy complexion, deep black hair and eyes, glittering white teeth, and muscular but graceful form. And he too—though not like his father a secret emissary of the Society of Jesus*—was a zeal-

* Says a reliable writer upon the subject—"Every Jesuit is a spy upon every Jesuit; a net work of perfidy embraces the entire community, and from its meshes not even those highest in authority stand for a moment clear." And

ous, bigoted, and uncompromising Catholic; ready at all times, and under all circumstances, to stoop to any means to further his own ends, or advance the general interests of the Mother Church.

Besides Pedro, and his son Ferdinand, one other important person dwelt beneath the roof of the ancient mansion house. That was Viola Hastings.

The mother of Viola Hastings was Pedro Torillo's only sister. In her youth and beauty she had wedded an American gentleman named Horace Hastings, a Southerner of immense wealth; and who, like herself, was a member—though not a very strict one—of the Roman Church. Not many years subsequent to the birth of Viola, her father was accidentally killed; and still a few years later, while yet our heroine was but a child, the mother, after a brief and severe illness, departed this life.

The sister, of course, placed implicit confidence in her brother, nor ever harbored the thought that anything could induce him to prove unkind to his own kin; and so the young girl and her splendid fortune were alike consigned to the guardianship of Pedro Torillo. This was when Viola was in her tenth year.

not only are they spies upon each other, but upon outside individuals and governments; and whatever was the effect originally designed by this system of *espionage*, in the present day, and under the present circumstances, it opens the door to most mischievous consequences, and places within the reach of unscrupulous and rascally men the means of gratifying every passion and desire, no matter how dangerous or wicked.

For the five years following, the budding, dreaming girl lived quietly—for to her Torillo never exhibited any of the violence of his disposition—at the old mansion house ; seldom going abroad, and when she did, never unattended. To her unsophisticated, unawakened mind, this surveillance meant nothing but a very natural and commendable desire to shield her from personal harm. She was too young, and felt too secure, to fathom the designs, which from the very moment of her first entrance into the house, had taken possession of her uncle's brain.

At fifteen years of age, according to a binding obligation which he had made to his dying sister, Pedro Torillo carried his niece to a Catholic Seminary, in Maryland. But even this he resolved to turn to account, in a manner which will shortly appear. One so fruitful in schemes was seldom at a loss.

Three years after, when Viola was eighteen—at about which time we shall first introduce the reader at the old mansion house—she was suddenly and secretly—in the latter respect as much so as was at all possible—conveyed back to her uncle's estate on the Schuylkill. The reason for this change, and other matters which had intervened, will be explained hereafter.

At fifteen years of age the beauty of Viola's person was of that description which men sometimes dream of, but so seldom encounter in a tangible form. The

worshiping painter might transfix upon his canvas the impression of her exquisitely symmetrical form—the soft olive hue of her complexion—the ripe glow of her rounded cheek—the deep red of her perfectly cut lip, and the dazzling whiteness of her pearly teeth—for she was of a Southern stock, and such mature early;—he might present some idea of her full, black, liquid eyes—picture something of the luxuriant beauty of her waving black hair; but for the writer to attempt it with nothing but mere words, would be a positive waste of time. With Byron we can but exclaim—

> "Who hath not proved how feebly words essay,
> To fix one spark of beauty's heavenly ray?"

Added to these gifts of person was the more lasting beauty of a well-informed mind, a cultivated taste, a refined and correct sympathy, and a liberal and just appreciation of what was right and proper. These feelings were not, however, artificial; they were created with her, and in her, and time but served to develop their power and beauty. In every respect, as all will see, Viola was a being to love and cherish.

Besides Pedro, and his son Ferdinand, and Viola, there was a housekeeper, and several other male and female domestics attached to—and they were perfect fixtures—the old mansion; but these do not, at least, at present, require any particular description. Their parts in the succeeding drama are at best but trifling.

CHAPTER III.

BEGINNING OF TROUBLE.—VIOLA AT THE CONVENT SCHOOL.—SCHEMES TO INDUCE HER TO TAKE THE VAIL.

AND now, reader, we will go back to the time when Viola first left her uncle's house on the banks of the Schuylkill. She was then, it will be remembered, fifteen years of age, and fast ripening into that perfection of mental and physical beauty, which in after years, so distinguished her.

In due time Pedro Torillo and his niece arrived at the Convent School. The young girl was immediately introduced to her associates ; and while she was busy making their acquaintance, her uncle was closeted with the Superior. What transpired at that interview may be guessed from the course which the latter afterwards pursued. With many kind admonitions, by which he artfully vailed his true thoughts and intentions, the plotting Jesuit at length bade his beautiful niece farewell, and departed.

And in that moment appeared the cloud, small at first, but gradually increasing in size, which, for three years, darkened Viola's pathway.

From the first hour of the young girl's arrival at the Seminary, she was treated differently from the other scholars. They were, comparatively speaking, free; while she, on the contrary, was subjected to a regularly organized system of espionage, delicate and unobtrusive, and artfully concealed, it is true, but none the less comprehensive and certain. Each of the Sisters had her part to play—wherefore they knew not, for it was only their province to obey—and they set about their tasks immediately, indifferent alike to both the cause and the effect.

Either the Superior or one of her saint-like assistants was continually by Viola's side; and manifold were the glowing panegyrics, that, on all possible occasions, were bestowed on the blessed life of those who accepted the vail, as a propitiation for their own, and the sins of their fellow-creatures. The conversations, and other movements of a similar character, were managed very adroitly, and with a view to temper the young girl's mind to a proper condition to receive any after impression, and yet so as not to alarm her youthful fancy. Her uncle's object—and we might as well state it here as elsewhere—was to induce her to retire to a Convent; and the means to

be used in accomplishing that result were deceit, deception, hypocrisy.

Viola, it is true, was born of Catholic parents, and sprung of a Catholic family upon both sides; but as yet, her mind, in fact, had received no fixed religious impressions. Such instances we may frequently see, especially in the present enlightened day. Children no longer feel bound to be governed by either the religious or political opinions of their parents, or their ancestors; but claim the inalienable privilege of thinking and acting for themselves, according to their own judgment and observation—themselves only being responsible, before God and man, for the course which they pursue. So Viola felt, in part at least, even then. And what little chance she had had for familiarizing herself with the religion of the "heretics," had caused a wavering in her mind, which rendered her, unconsciously as it were, undecided. She was a Romanist, and she was not. By right of birth that was her religion, but by the power of conscience its opposite was more truly so. Her's was a soul that was naturally inclined to elevate itself out of the mire of bigotry, and the darkness of superstition. And when these glowing, eloquent panegyrics of the nun's life were buzzed in her ear, she listened to them quietly and patiently, as an evil she could not shun; but without any idea of ever herself blotting out her mortal existence with the dark shadow of the

vail. Of her thoughts and feelings, however, nc living being was aware ; and even she herself, as we have already stated, was, at this time, undecided. But events were hatching in the future, which surely and forever, turned the current of her young impressions.

CHAPTER IV.

VIOLA STILL AT THE CONVENT SCHOOL.—THE PLOT THICKENING.—FALSE REPRESENTATIONS.—THE FORGED LETTER.

THUS passed a year—to Viola a tedious period; for long before its expiration she had wearied of the restraint which cramped all her actions, and hung upon her heart with a crushing weight. The continued representations of the beatific felicity of the nun's life produced upon her mind a contrary effect to that which was designed; though she never openly expressed herself as opposed to such views and opinions. In fact, her mind, at that time, was something of a chaos, where the associations of a past life, and the influence of that creed with which she had heretofore been surrounded, were struggling with newer impressions, which an invisible power was expanding in her soul.

At the expiration of the year her uncle made his appearance at the Convent school; having, of course, designedly absented himself for so long a period.

"Have you carried out my instructions?"—he de-

manded, of the Superior; having first sought her presence that he might the better know what course to pursue with Viola.

"Implicitly," she replied. "There has not been a single occasion, nor a circumstance, permitted to slip by, that could, possibly, be turned to account. We have incessantly endeavored to impress on her mind the importance of being enrolled among the faithful, and the great joy, and peace, and blessedness of that life, which it is your wish—though as yet she knows it not—that she should embrace."

"And with what success?" inquired Torillo, eagerly.

"None, I think," rejoined the Superior. "She is ever passive, but impenetrable—listens, but is silent—attends to every lesson, but shows no desire for anything further. The subject either does not excite any emotion at all, for or against it; or, for one so young, she has a wonderful command over her feelings; as it is, I fear we shall but have our labor for our pains. But you will see her, and you can then judge for yourself. In her studies, however, she is remarkably proficient, evincing an unbounded desire for all manner of information."

"Send her hither," said Torillo, in an abstracted manner.

"I will," responded the Superior. "But first let me ask you one thing."

"Go on!"

"Is there not something more weighty, more powerful than the mere requirements of religion—something to enlist the feelings, that might be urged upon your niece to induce her to take this step?"

"I know of nothing," rejoined Torillo, musingly. "I see but one course left. Possess her entire fortune I must, if I have to resort to compulsion."

"In this part of the world that were best left as the very last resort," responded the more cautious female. Suspicion of the Holy Church seems indiginous to this soil, and it behooves us always to be very guarded. Think again of my question."

There was a moment's pause, and Torillo sat with his sallow face buried in his shriveled hands.

"Yes! yes! I think that would do!" he suddenly muttered, as if in answer to some suggestion from another party.

"What?" demanded the Superior, who still continued standing close by.

Torillo looked up under his heavy eyebrows at his interlocutor.

"If she were induced to think that it was her mother's dying request, she might then accede," responded the scheming Jesuit, inquiringly.

"The very thing!" exclaimed the Superior. "If she has a heart—and who can doubt it?—such an appeal will do its work. I will now send her to you. Ply her well."

"Trust me for that!" replied Torillo; and with this assurance his female confederate quitted the room.

After she was gone, Torillo muttered to himself—the while slowly pacing up and down the apartment—

"I do not fear blood nor death; but as she is my sister's child, and one of us, I had rather rid myself of her without any violence. If, however, she will not be induced to take the veil"—and these words passed through his teeth like the hiss of an envenomed serpent—"by the holy cross! I must resort to some other method of putting her out of the way. Her money I *must*, and *will*, have. My necessities, if nothing else, demand her sacrifice. Besides, a large portion of it is already spent; and if she happened ever to marry, the law might call me to a too strict account. Ah!" he continued, assuming a listening attitude, "footsteps! she comes! Now to play a deeper game."

At that moment, Viola, radiant with smiles, entered the apartment, and greeted her uncle pleasantly.

It will be borne in mind that at this time the young girl was unsuspicious of any plot, and, therefore, undreaming of her guardian uncle's complicity.

"You are looking well and happy, Viola, and I am glad of it," said Torillo, as he held her hands in his, and looked into her face pleasantly. "I hope to see you always looking so. Now sit down here beside

me, for I wish to talk to you ;" and he drew her down to a chair, and seated himself close beside her. "Do you like living here?" he continued, kindly, and softly. "I am told that you exhibit a great fondness, and aptness, for learning."

Viola was silent ; and from the expression of her face, she was evidently revolving something in her mind. Torillo repeated the question :—

"Do you like living here, Viola?"

"I scarcely know what to say, uncle," she responded, at length. "There are, however, many things which I could certainly wish otherwise ; but in this world, I know, we cannot have every thing as we desire."

"Indeed, no," replied Torillo. "But to what do you refer particularly?"

The artful Jesuit was now sounding the young girl.

"I have not liberty enough, for one thing, uncle," rejoined Viola, innocently. "I am watched too much—wherefore, I cannot imagine. I did not see this at first, but it is plain enough now."

"Ah, my child, that is but in accordance with my instructions, and I am sure I act only for your good. It was not from any wish to curtail your freedom that I left such directions—it arose, only, from my anxiety for your safety. But perhaps they have been too zealous. I will speak about it before I leave."

"Then again, uncle," continued Viola, "they worry

me more than I am willing to confess, by their ceaseless panegyrics of the happy and blessed life of the nun. I don't dispute but what it may be just as they say; but, uncle, I am here to be educated, and not to be pestered—for it is nothing less—with such things. It is out of place, uncalled for, and tiresome. I have not spoken of these things before, or to any one else; but to you I feel it to be my duty."

"Right, my dear child," returned Torillo, concealing his own disappointment under a smooth exterior; and then he relapsed into a thoughtful, but not a frowning mood.

"Will you try to make it a little pleasanter in these respects, uncle?" inquired Viola.

There was a pause; and then, without replying to her question, her uncle addressed her, slowly, and with seeming sorrow.

"Viola," he said, and so consummate was his hypocrisy, that his voice even trembled as with the power of his emotion; "I have a duty to perform, and, under the circumstances, there is no better time than the present in which to execute it. Your words have brought it fresh to my memory, reminding me of an unwelcome obligation. Though I may regret the course I feel compelled to pursue, my duty to the dead leaves me no alternative."

Viola did not reply, for her uncle's words were to her an enigma. She only looked at him, wondering.

"Let me confess, my dear child," he continued, again taking her hand in his, "that these things of which you complain, have a deeper meaning than appears; and it is best that I should now make you acquainted with my reasons for pursuing such a course. Prepare yourself, my child, for the worst; for whatever happiness the prospect might bring to others, to you I perceive, from your manner and language, it can only be a source of sorrow."

Still Viola was silent; but her face expressed all her wonder, astonishment, and dread of some coming evil, she knew not what.

"Your mother, my dear and only sister," continued the hypocritical, scheming villain, sentimentally; "upon her death bed confided you, her only child, to my care and protection. Faithfully have I endeavored to carry out her wishes, and it now only remains for me, disagreeable as the duty may be, to perform her final and most urgent request."

Torillo paused as if loth to proceed, but in reality only to gather his thoughts. Viola never removed her eyes from his face, but still continued silent. At length he went on with seeming reluctance.

"In the last hours of her life, Viola, your good mother—for she was good"—Torillo looked up reverentially, and a silent tear trickled down the face of the young girl—"after affectionately confiding you to my care and protection, placed in my hands a package,

at the same time binding me by the most solemn obligations of the church, faithfully to carry out the directions contained therein. With blind love I promised; and then your good mother breathed her last in these arms."

"And they had sent me from the room, when most I should have been there!" cried Viola, in an agony of grief; forgetting all else in the memory of her mother's death. "O, I remember it well!"

"You were but a child, Viola, and could not have done her any good; while the sight of you might have rendered her dying hour more painful," responded Torillo; and at the same time he mentally thanked his own good fortune that it had not occurred otherwise.

"Still it was none the less hard, nor is the memory of it any the less painful," sobbed Viola. "But go on, uncle."

"Until lately I have not thought it necessary, my dear child," continued her uncle, very kindly, "to impart to you the fact that your poor dead mother had bequeathed you to the service of the Holy Church."

The effect upon Viola of this communication was instantaneous; and she uttered a suppressed and painful scream.

"No, no, uncle, you jest with me!" she exclaimed, with startling rapidity.

"For your sake, my dear child, considering the

state of your feelings, would it were so," responded Torillo. And then after an apparently thoughtful pause, he resumed ;—" and yet I cannot exactly see, why that to one born and educated as you have been, the thought should be so very distressing!—What better destiny can any of us hope for, than to be good and faithful followers of the Blessed Virgin!"

" O uncle, don't talk so," murmured Viola in agonizing tones. " But did my mother really consign me to such a destiny?"

" Can you doubt my word, my child?"

" No, no, uncle ; but it seems too dreadful for belief!" responded Viola, in a bewildered manner.

" My dear child, listen to me," said Torillo, bending an affectionate look upon her. " With such feelings it may be very hard to you ; and yet I cannot but counsel you to heed your dying mother's word. And that they were such you shall yourself judge. The package of which I have spoken comprised two letters—the first was directed to me, the other to yourself. I need scarcely repeat the contents of mine ; and yet, probably, it would be better. Your mother spoke of her undying love for the Holy Church—of her many hopes for you, and of her earnest wish that you should consecrate yourself, heart, soul, body, life and fortune, to the service of that religion in which she had lived, and in which she should die. The fulfillment of that wish she solemnly left to me, charging

me so to educate and temper your mind as to withdraw your desires from the things of this earth, to the higher hopes of heaven. And, Viola, I have sought to carry out her wishes to the letter. If I have failed, I can lay my hand upon my heart and declare that it is no fault of mine. *The responsibility must rest elsewhere.*"

Torillo strongly aspirated the concluding sentence, leaving Viola no room to misunderstand the tenor of his allusion.

"I know it! I feel it!" she murmured mentally. "Upon my own soul, only, must rest the responsibility of foregoing my mother's wish. O! just Heaven, is there anything but submission left me?"

Her uncle watched the play of her features intently, and the quiet smile that rested upon his thin lips, told of some inward satisfaction. Doubtless he thought the character of her emotion favorable to his designs.

A few moments passed away in silence, and then Torillo continued:

"The letter directed to yourself, my child, shall be forwarded to you immediately on my return home. Of its contents I am ignorant, it being sealed."

With her pale face now buried in her little white hands, Viola was weeping bitterly, and the tears rained down her cheeks like a tempest. Her uncle looked on rather pleased than otherwise with her

emotion, for he fancied it an evidence of the power which her mother's words would exercise upon her mind.

"O, uncle, it may be wrong," she at length broke forth, and in the most passionate manner, "it may be an offence against high heaven and my mother's memory, but I cannot regard such an event with any other than the most agonizing feelings. Life is sweet, and the world beautiful, to all; but more especially to one, who, like myself, is standing only on its threshold. And though, while living, I loved my mother dearly, and now that she is dead, revere her memory sacredly, I cannot but think that in this she permitted her religious zeal to outweigh her love, and kindness, and justice."

"Still, my dear child, though it may even be as you say, a dying mother's last and solemn wish should be held sacred. It is the duty of the child to comply with, not arraign, a parent's commands."

"I know it, uncle, I know it!" responded Viola, "but when those commands interfere with the prosperity and happiness of the child, there is some doubt as to the propriety of, and the obligation to, obey them."

This self-reliant and independent reasoning displeased, and discouraged Torillo. He frowned darkly, and his heavy eyebrows lowered so as almost to

conceal the orbs beneath. In a moment, however, and before it was observed, the look had vanished.

"And yet," continued Viola, her thoughts going back to the days of her childhood—"it is hard, it is painful, to turn from the wishes of a parent—to pursue a course contrary to that which they have fondly, though, perhaps, misjudgingly, marked out for us."

Her uncle's face grew brighter and brighter with every word.

"But, O, uncle," she still continued, "against *this* all my thoughts, desires, and inclinations powerfully rebel. And must I, to obey my mother, perjure myself, by taking upon me vows, which in the making I know to be false? It is in the spirit more than in the letter that every obligation of life is rightly and truly performed; and in submitting myself to such a destiny, with my present feelings, uncle, I should offer myself an unwilling sacrifice at the altar of filial duty."

"But, dear child," said her uncle, softly, "your present feelings may undergo a change—*will*, if you but strive. As a parent I must still advise you, at least, to *endeavor* to bring your mind to obey your mother's last injunction. She was older, and wiser, and better qualified to judge of what would be good for your happiness than you are yourself. And, Viola, there may come a day when you will thank me for this advice. You may not think so now, but such an

act of disobedience would embitter all your future days."

"O, uncle, I know not what to say or how to act!" responded Viola, distractedly. "I cannot, cannot consent thus to bury myself for all time—thus to shut myself out forever from the bright and beautiful world; and yet my mother's words seem too sacred to be entirely cast aside. O, was ever a poor maid placed in such a situation! What, what shall I do?"

"My dear child, I must confess that your repugnance to this honorable institution of the Church astonishes me; and creates in my mind a suspicion which I feign would not harbor. And yet it cannot be, Viola——" and the tones of Torillo's voice bespoke more of sorrow than of anger—"it cannot be that you have forsaken the religion of the Holy Church—the faith of all your family!"

There was a pause, and to Viola an embarrassing one. That her mind was really swerving she well knew; and feeling a repugnance to utter a deliberate falsehood, she was at a loss what answer to make. And to confess her feelings to her uncle, situated as she was, was more than she dare do.

Her silence seemed to confirm Torillo's suspicion—for he really had begun to entertain the thought he expressed—and for the first time he somewhat forgot the part he was playing.

"And is it really so!" he exclaimed, angrily. "By

what devilish agency has this accursed heresy been accomplished ?"

"Stop, uncle !" cried Viola, suddenly interrupting him. "Your violence will overpower me ; for already my strength has been too greatly tasked. If I answered you not immediately, it was because my thoughts were too greatly confused—nothing more. So many things at times bewilder my poor brain."

This ambiguous reply mollified Torillo ; and when again he addressed the young girl his voice was as soft and mild as a woman's.

"I was hasty, my dear child—think not of it," he said, after a moment's silence ; concluding, probably, that by a display of his disposition he should only frighten his niece and overreach his object. "I was vexed and disappointed," he added ; "not really angered, however. The thought that my sister's child —my own niece—should so far forget herself and her connections as to turn her back upon the Holy Church, and become an apostate to her religion, for the moment unbalanced me. Think not of it, dear child. It is your welfare—you, whom I love so dearly—that renders me so sensitive, and urges me so powerfully to exert all my poor, but well meaning influence to induce you to accede to your dead mother's last request, however your own feelings may now be opposed to such a course. And if you but *think* favorably of it—view it in the light in which a good Chris-

tian, and a faithful daughter should—the sacrifice will become rather a pleasure than a pain."

"Uncle, in my religion, and my duty, as in everything else, I shall always, I hope, endeavor to do what is right," responded the young girl, more calmly, but still with a very unsettled manner.

"I believe you, my dear child," rejoined her uncle, satisfied with the impression which he fancied he had made upon his niece's mind. "I fully believe you, and therefore I will leave you for the present. Think well, think deeply, think fully, of what I have communicated, so that when I come again you may be prepared to give me your final decision. Prostrate before the Blessed Virgin, seek, day and night, a proper condition of mind to consider your dying mother's injunction, and what is the best course for a loving and filial child to pursue."

"I will seek to do all that is right and proper, uncle," rejoined Viola, absently.

"I trust so," continued Torillo, pressing a fatherly kiss upon the young girl's marble brow. "Your mother's letter, of which I have spoken, shall immediately be placed in your hand. And now, farewell, my dear child."

"Farewell, uncle," responded Viola, burying her white face in her trembling hands.

CHAPTER V.

THE JESUIT REVEALS HIS PLANS TO THE SUPERIOR OF THE CONVENT SCHOOL, AND DIRECTS HER HOW TO ACT WITH VIOLA DURING THE ENSUING YEAR.

In another small apartment of the aforesaid Convent School, a few minutes subsequent to the interview just recorded, were seated Torillo, and the female previously introduced.

"Well, what think you?" demanded the latter.

"Think!" rejoined Torillo, speaking quickly; "why, I think we shall have more trouble than I fancied, even should we succeed at all."

"And what did the perverse girl say?"

"Many things! Among others she complained of too much restraint, and too much talk of Convent life."

"I but followed your instructions."

"I told her so; explaining to her that it was only for her good. She does not like it, however, and we must change our tactics. The girl is observing, and clear-headed, for one of her years. We must pursue

another course ; or rather let the seed which I have planted take root and bloom without restraint."

"What do you mean ?"

"This ! Viola has a horror of the Convent which it will be hard to eradicate. For one so young, and one brought up as she has been, I did not expect quite so great a show of antipathy—but nevertheless her aversion appears almost unconquerable. Besides that, too—though I do not think she quite understands it herself yet—she wavers somewhat in her duty to the Church."

"An apostate !" ejaculated the pious Superior, indignantly.

"Not quite ; but yet I think tending that way," rejoined Torillo. "And that makes my course a *duty* as a"—he hesitated a little as if in want of a word, but finally added—"convenience. Any show of apostacy"—he continued—"must be crushed out, if life be crushed out with it. With our devotion to the Church, no other consideration must ever interfere ; but in this case I can combine my duty to the Church, with my personal interests, and make of it a common cause."

There was a momentary pause, and then Torillo went on—

"And, as I have told you before, if my object can be accomplished otherwise, I would rather not resort to violence."

"And if it cannot?" returned the female, inquiringly.

"Leave the rest to me," rejoined Torillo, with a peculiar look. "Where there's a will there's a way; and '*the end justifies the means*' in and out of the Church."

There was another pause of a few seconds, when Torillo resumed his remarks.

"As I was saying," he continued, "Viola revolts at the idea of a Convent. Even when I told her that it was her dying mother's wish, she plead and argued against it. Nor could all my logic produce more than a feeling of indecision. The story took her by surprise, and amazed, and grieved her, immeasurably. I left her weighed down by a conflict of contending emotions. The thought that it was her mother's last and most urgent request, however—which idea I pushed home, hard—made some impression, I think, upon her mind. Our best plan now, is, to let it work for awhile."

"And did she not suspect, think you?"

"No! What reason could she have for suspicion? I have ever been kind and friendly towards her—why then should she think that I would deceive her? Besides, I clinched the story very effectually by telling her of two letters, which I declared her dying mother had left in my care. One of them, I said, was directed to myself, and contained the particulars

of what I had just communicated to her—while the other was sealed and directed to her. The latter I promised to forward to her immediately."

"A very pretty story," remarked the Superior, evidently pleased with the cunning that had been displayed. But the letter —"

"Shall be forthcoming as soon as promised," said Torillo, finishing the sentence. "I can imitate my sister's style and chirography admirably, and I will indite a communication in accordance with the story I have invented, as soon as I get home. You will then see that it is placed in her hands."

"Certainly!"

"My niece will remain with you another year, at the expiration of which time I hope to see my plans successful."

"And what course shall I now pursue?" demanded the Superior.

"This! Watch the girl with the eye of an argus, but let it be done in such a manner as not to alarm her. Let her *feel* that she is unrestrained, though your vigilance be trebled. Drop all conversation that may fret or worry her. She will not, however, suspect any collusion between us; and if, at any time, you can indirectly do or say anything that will help my plan—that is, anything that will not appear aimed at her expressly—why, profit by the occasion.

But be guarded! Better, too, leave her alone with her own thoughts as much as possible."

"I will do my best."

"Do that, and I am satisfied. In the end we shall then succeed, and through our success we shall, together, bring a backsliding servant to the feet of the Holy Church, while I individually, shall gain —"

"Wealth," broke in the woman, smiling.

"And you," continued Torillo, returning her smile.

"The satisfaction of doing my duty, and helping —"

"A friend," said Viola's uncle, concluding the sentence.

Then Torillo went his way, and his female coadjutor returned to her duties in the school.

Think you, my reader, that such women—and this one was but the type of many—are fitting persons to whom to intrust the education of the youthful mind?

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORGED LETTER AGAIN.—VIOLA'S GRIEF.

We left Viola, as her uncle had truly informed the Superior, bowed down with grief and sorrow. For a long time after Torillo's departure she could do nothing but weep, and her emotion was of the deepest and most powerful character. It seemed to rend her very heart. Her ardent, hopeful, imaginative nature, notwithstanding her Papish education and associations, revolted at the thought of burying herself in such a living tomb as a Convent. But, in the midst of these thoughts would come crushing back upon her heart, her dying mother's wish, in that moment, seemingly too sacred, too holy, to be neglected or cast aside. And then she would weep again, and her heart would be rent by the fierce struggle which duty and inclination were waging.

After some time the Superior went to the young girl, and without commenting at all upon the condition in which she found her, kindly urged her to retire to her own domicil. The young girl silently obeyed,

and when alone gave way again to the struggle which was agitating her bosom.

"O, mother! dear, dear mother!" she cried, kneeling down by the side of her little cot; "could you only have known the misery you were bringing upon me, never, never, would you have bound me to such a life. You were too kind, too loving, so to embitter all my life. O, what shall I do? To obey, is to destroy all my happiness—to disobey, can but make me miserable!"

Thus she talked, and wept, until at length she fell asleep. Day followed day, and each was like the other—to Viola full of misery. The struggle between her duty to herself on the one side, and her duty to her mother on the other, still ravaged her bosom, and as violently as at the first. Each feeling seemed determined to hold its own, and between the two Viola's anguish was almost insupportable.

During this time, and throughout the whole of the ensuing twelve months, Torillo's directions were religiously carried out, and the young girl was, apparently, left to follow the bent of her own inclinations. Her studies were made light—her duties nominal. No restraint was *seemingly* exercised, nor was there any more extolling, as a general thing, of the blessed and desirable life of the cloister. Occasionally the Superior would lecture the scholars collectively—and among the number were several Protestant girls,

whose parents were much more foolish than they would have liked, doubtless, to have been thought—upon the general duties of life, *the obedience that under all circumstances was due to parents*, the requirements of religion, and *the peace and repose to be found in the bosom of the Holy Church*. These lectures were aimed by the Superior, as well at the Protestant scholars under her charge, as at Viola; for the servants of the "Infallible Church" never neglect an opportunity for proselyting. Viola, however—for with the others we have now nothing to do—could not but think, from the general character of the lectures, that the choosing of the subjects was unintentional, though the matter therein bore directly on those points which most were agitating her own bosom.

The fourth day after her uncle's visit Viola received the promised letter; and its contents served but to increase the despondency and anguish of her feelings. The epistle was artfully worded. It was written by one—and who else but Torillo?—who knew well the peculiarities of Viola's mother, and who knew, too, that the child was not so young when her mother died, but that she, likewise, would remember, and expect to see a display of them—and who profited well by the knowledge he possessed. In thrilling words it described the dangerous temptations of the hollow world; in beautiful language it pictured forth the peace and quiet of the cloister; and in glowing

terms it urged upon Viola, for her dear mother's sake, to embrace the holy calling. Nothing was spared—not an argument that could bear upon her feelings was overlooked—not a stone, so to speak, was left unturned.

From that hour the young girl was a prey to the most desponding feelings; and in the agony of her heart, life almost grew to be distasteful and burthensome. And that was the very state of mind which her artful uncle most desired to produce. Her spirits once broken down, he argued—and this continued struggle, if it can but be kept up, will eventually have that effect—and life would not look so pleasant and enticing, nor her mother's request appear so dreadful. In that hour she might be prevailed on. It was subtile—it was likely to succeed; but still Viola yielded but slowly, like a brave soldier disputing the ground inch by inch.

CHAPTER VII.

END OF ANOTHER YEAR.—THE JESUIT AGAIN AT THE CONVENT SCHOOL.—VIOLA GOES TO MT. CARMEL.

THUS passed the second year of Viola's scholastic life. The young girl was thinner and paler than usual, but none the less lovely. With Torillo it had passed away in schemes and intrigues, personal and otherwise. And during the time, too, he had used large sums of money belonging to Viola, which, as the year began to draw to a close, made him still more anxious to accomplish his designs upon the young girl.

Again he visited the Convent school—again talked over his prospects with the Superior, and had another interview with Viola. The same mildness, gentleness, and kindness characterised his deportment toward his niece—the same insidious hypocrisy marked his every word. And Viola, herself, exhibited the same distress of mind—the same reluctance to comply with her mother's request at the price of her own happiness, and yet the same desire to per-

form all that a dutiful and loving child consistently should. Torillo argued—not, he said, that he had any especial interest in doing so, aside from her own welfare—and Viola wept and pleaded. The poor girl's mental agony would have melted any *human* heart ; but, alas ! for her, Torillo, figuratively speaking, had no heart at all.

At length he had exhausted all his rhetoric, and nearly all his patience. Viola's persevering obstinacy, as he mentally termed it, was almost too much for his naturally violent and impatient nature. Finally he proposed to his niece, as a sort of compromise, that she should spend the ensuing year at the Convent of Mt. Carmel, in the probationary character of a Sister of Mercy—declaring, solemnly, that if at the end of that period her prejudices still overcame her sense of duty, he would absolve himself from the whole matter, and urge her no further.

In view of what she supposed to be her dying mother's request, and with the full conviction that in complying with this suggestion she in no way committed herself, nor in any manner bound herself, to pursue a course contrary to her wishes, she made no objection to this proposition ; and so the matter was finally settled. With this understanding the young girl retired to her little domicil, there to weep and mourn alone ; and her uncle sought again the presence of the Superior.

"Well!" demanded the latter, as Torillo entered the receiving-room where she had been awaiting him.

"The bird is snared!" cried Torillo, exultingly.

"In what manner?"

"This. I have prevailed upon her to pass a probationary year at Mt. Carmel. Let her once go *there*, and the rest, I think, will prove easy."

"Yes;" responded the Superior. "When shall you start?"

"Immediately! See you that everything requisite is made ready. We must reach Mt. Carmel before dark."

Torillo could scarcely conceal his pleasure, so confident did he now feel of a speedy success; but the ways of Providence are inscrutable, and the very ends by which men frequently hope to accomplish their purposes, are sometimes turned against them to their own discomfiture. So it proved with Viola's scheming uncle. In his blind anxiety he had not calculated all the chances, as will soon appear. To do so was beyond the range of the human mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIOLA AT MT. CARMEL.—THE BREAKING OUT OF THE FEVER IN THE SOUTH.—VIOLA A NURSE.

THE Convent of Mt. Carmel was situated in a beautiful section of the country in the immediate vicinity of the city of Baltimore. Thither Viola Hastings was conveyed by her uncle. Little passed between the two on the road, and a simple farewell —not in anger, however, nor suspiciously—when they parted at the Convent. The heart of the young girl was too full for words, and her uncle was perfectly satisfied, so long as his ends were accomplished, to remain silent.

This Convent, we will here state, was as well the abiding place of the Sisters of Mercy as the abode of Nuns. Here came ignorant, fanatical, and weak-minded women to serve a brief probation—longer or shorter, as might be thought necessary—ere they forever shut themselves out from God's beautiful world—from the warm sunshine of the Almighty's smile—from sympathy with their fellow-creatures,

and from every humanizing influence. Call that, who dare, the religion which God, in all his works, teaches!

The Sisters of Mercy at the Convent of Mt. Carmel were entered for a year at a time; and at the end of that period they could either withdraw—so it was represented, though with what truth we are not prepared to say—renew their vows for another year, or take the black vail. Upon their entrance into the Convent, each candidate assumed a religious designation, which entirely absorbed her own proper name. Viola was given that of Ursula; and henceforth then, for twelve months, at least, she was no longer Viola Hastings, but Sister Ursula.

Some few months after the young girl had been entered at the Convent, the fatal fever peculiar to the southern latitudes, broke out with most alarming violence. All the large cities were almost instantaneously visited by the fearful scourge. Hundreds died off daily, and the most unbounded consternation prevailed on all sides. Business was almost entirely suspended, and the panic-stricken inhabitants fled precipitately, hurrying wildly away from the path of the irresistible monster, so to speak, and leaving but few, in comparison with numbers, to nurse the sick, and attend to the dead.

In this dreadful dilemma all classes of people were appealed to for aid, personal and pecuniary. It was

a time when to stand back was out of the question. The demand of the authorities was imperative, and not to be overlooked or pushed aside.

Many hitherto backward now responded to the call. Among the number were the Sisters of Mercy of Mt. Carmel. Of the feelings which, as a body, influenced them, we will say nothing—our business lies especially with Viola, to whom the present condition of affairs, as time soon developed, opened a new era. As a class they may have felt the compulsion of the occasion, or, in exposing themselves, sought to win sympathy for the Holy Church. It was quite likely to be either, or both of these, as anything else. Individually they may have been actuated by entirely different feelings. Be that as it may—and we leave the reader to draw his own conclusions—the Sisters of Mercy, with Viola among their number, were soon *en route* for a point where the fever was raging with unexampled fury, and where their services, or that of somebody else, were most urgently needed.

Viola and her Lover. Page 75.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FEVER HOSPITAL.—VIOLA'S PATIENT.

In one of the little apartments of a large building which had been converted into a temporary hospital, during the greatest height of the pestilence, was reposing the form of a man; and bending over his body was the graceful figure of Viola Hastings.

This building—which was large, and well adapted to the purpose to which it was now devoted, having once been a hotel—was under the especial care of the Sisters of Mercy of Mt. Carmel; and every room had its pestilence stricken patient, and its attendant nurse; the whole being under the supervision of a Superior, old, argus-eyed and uncompromising.

To Viola's care and attention had fallen one whose destiny was ever after inseparably linked with her own; and from this moment may be dated the turning point in her fate.

Let us now describe this person; and then briefly review a few subsequent events, materially connected with this story, and the fate of Viola, though still not

of that interest to the reader, probably, as to warrant us in entering into any very lengthy description. It will be seen in what follows how Torillo overreached his own cunning in sending Viola to Mt. Carmel; or, rather, how an All-wise Providence interfered to frustrate his designs.

Kenneth Egerton—Viola's patient—was of pure American blood. For generations back all his ancestors had been American Protestants, and through them he had early imbibed an unconquerable dislike—and in after years his maturer judgment confirmed his youthful impressions—for every thing appertaining to Roman Catholicism. Though not a professing Christian, as the world goes, a stauncher opponent of illiberal, bigoted Romanism, no where existed. He was one of those who believed the Papish Church to be dangerous to our Republican institutions, and to our Protestant religion;—dangerous, in the power and unscrupulousness of her priests—in the darkness, and bigotry, and superstition, of her followers—in her greedy thirst for temporal power, and above all, in the consolidation of all her elements.*

* G. P. R. James in his romance of "*Heidelberg*" puts into the mouth of one of his characters some remarks upon this point, which are as applicable now and here, as they were then and there. They are as follows:—

"This is in truth, a struggle betwixt the Protestants and Papists of Germany. Now, there is something in the very nature of the two religions which gives disunion to the one, consolidation to the other. The Papists are all agreed on every essential point, they are all tutored in the same school, look to the same

In years he counted about twenty-three, and in personal appearance, when in a state of health, he was manly, prepossessing, even handsome. And the very soul of honor, he was always open, brave, and straightforward. What higher compliment can we pay him, morally or physically?

Through the influence of some powerful friends, whom his many fine qualities had early won to his interest—his own immediate family being reduced in numbers and position, and both his parents being dead—he had been appointed a midshipman in the navy, and about the time of our first acquaintance with him he had risen to a lieutenancy. Happening in the city of W——, when the fever broke out, and scorning to desert those to whom his services might prove so invaluable, he soon fell a victim to the generosity of his feelings, and in turn was prostrated by the uncompromising disease.

From the very first moment when Viola bent over the fever-stricken young man, her feelings had been

objects, have in the most important matters the same interests. The least attack upon their religion is a rallying cry for them all; their will bends to its dictates, their banners unfurl at its call, their swords spring forth in its defence. They are one nation, one tribe, by a stronger tie than common country or common origin. They are one in religion, and the religion is one. But what is the case with the Protestants? Split into sects, divided into parties, recognizing no authority but their own individual judgments, they hate each other, with a hatred perhaps stronger than that which they feel towards the Romanists; or are cold to each other, which is worse. No, no, the whole tendencies of one party are to division, the whole tendencies of the other to union, and union is strength.'

powerfully and entirely enlisted in his behalf; and her attendance at his bedside soon grew to be a pleasure, notwithstanding the terror which surrounded her, and the danger in which she stood. In truth, these latter thoughts scarcely occupied her mind at all, so entirely was she absorbed in anxiety for her poor patient. Under any, and all circumstances, she was one of the few of that class with which she was associated, who would have performed their duty to suffering humanity, whatever its creed, willingly and unselfishly.

Thus passed many long, tedious, weary days, and at length Kenneth Egerton began to show signs of returning health. He had battled with the fierce monster and conquered.

The first object that his eyes encountered upon awaking to consciousness, was the sweet, gentle, beautiful face of Viola—beautiful, notwithstanding the disfigurement which it underwent from the ghostly peculiarity of her dress. Shading his eyes with his thin and still trembling hand, he gazed long and fixedly at the lovely and now blushing girl.

"What beautiful vision is this?" he at length murmured, as if communing with himself.

Now, had Viola been at all like many of her companions, she would have uttered some pious exclamation, and incontinently fled from the presence of the enraptured youth. But, being of a different mould,

and having different thoughts and feelings, she remained where she was, and replied very sweetly,

"Only your nurse, sir. I am very glad that you are so much better!"

"Are you, indeed?" inquired Kenneth, anxious to hear again the tones of that softly musical voice.

"O, yes!" responded Viola, and with such a smile as can only spring from the depths of a fond, and true, and tender heart.

CHAPTER X.

VIOLA AND HER LOVER.—THE SPY.—THE SUMMONS.—THE WATCH.—VIOLA SENT BACK TO MT. CARMEL.

From that hour Kenneth Egerton rapidly grew better—as rapidly, at least, as was at all possible under the circumstances. And still his gentle nurse hovered by his bedside, smoothing his pillow, and, by an hundred little attentions, lightening the days of his convalescence. Another power—why linger on so palpable a fact?—more potential than even duty, now swayed her heart—love. And the same ungovernable and o'ermastering feeling which had driven from her soul every other thought—almost every other consideration—had also taken undisputed and peremptory possession of the bosom of Kenneth.

Nor was it long before he and Viola had an explanation and an understanding. Before the time came round when it would have been necessary for the young girl to have given her attention elsewhere, there were no secrets between her and her patient. Each knew the other's whole history; and the indis-

soluble bond of mutual love united them together for ever and ever. This may seem sudden—and, unquestionably, so it was—but in their case none the less deep and lasting, as the eventful future proved.

The circumstances which surrounded Kenneth could not do otherwise than occasionally lead him to speak of Romanism; and, while he thanked Viola for her kindness to himself during his sickness, he yet freely expressed his abhorrence of her creed and her associations. But though he inveighed strongly against Roman Catholicism, in his liberality he admitted that there might be individual exceptions in it, as there were in everything else.

"In truth, Viola," he said, one evening—"there *must* be some exceptions, for you, yourself, are one—a bright and enduring exception. And yet it is not to such as you, my dear girl, that I refer when I denounce Romanists—it is to that great mass of blind, bigoted, intolerant, scheming men and women, who acknowledge no law, no religion, no good outside the limits of the Holy Church."

Thus talked Kenneth; and Viola listened to him, first for the love she bore himself, and then for the truth which her own heart soon whispered her that he uttered. Nor did the ardent and hopeful young man stop there. And what else did he hope for? you doubtless ask. Why, that as he had won the young girl's affections, he might also win her mind

from the darkness of Romanism. With an eloquence which only the deepest love could have inspired, he argued against the unnatural request of her mother—declared that both God and man would absolve a child from the fulfillment of such an obligation—that it was against all nature—contrary to true religion—opposed to happiness, and everything that made life desirable or worth possessing.

Then he drew a vivid picture of Romanism as it had been and as it was; and as the burning words fell from his eloquent tongue, Viola shuddered and turned pale. And then again he contrasted its past and present history, with the history of that religion which the Man Jesus had taught, and which is daily and hourly exhibited in all the innumerable works of God; and the young girl's heart thrilled with the blackness and the terror of the one, and the brightness and peace of the other. Thus Kenneth Egerton strengthened and confirmed those feelings which had already unconsciously taken root in Viola's heart—thus he completed what her own good and true nature had been for some time striving to work out.

"Ah, Kenneth, my own heart responds to all you say," was Viola's reply, when at length her new-found friend and lover paused. "Long ago did my heart turn to something brighter, and better, and purer than this creed of my fathers. All along I have felt that it lacked something—that it wanted the holy,

all-pervading spirit of true religion. But how can I escape? My uncle will never let me marry a heretic, even if I could make up my mind to disregard my poor, dead mother's wish. And yet to me a Convent life has always seemed very terrible—morally, physically, and intellectually. O, what shall I do? what shall I do?" and poor Viola wrung her little hands in agony.

"Put your trust in God, Viola, and follow the dictates of your own good heart," rejoined Kenneth, earnestly, "and for human aid rely upon my counsel and protection. With the Almighty's help I will yet, at some not very distant day, extricate you from all. But you must get me well, soon; and strong, too," he added, cheerfully and encouragingly.

"I will try, hard, very hard, Kenneth," responded the young girl, softly; "putting my trust for all things, your health and my safety, in Him who is all-powerful to aid and protect."

"—sh!" exclaimed Kenneth, suddenly fixing his eyes upon the door, which was at the other end of the room, and lifting his finger to admonish Viola to silence.

A painful stillness fell upon the little room. The twilight of the evening had passed away, and darkness was beginning to mantle the earth with its sombre covering. In the apartment things were beginning to grow indistinct; and through the little

window at the top of the room, the golden stars were beginning to shine brightly—for God granted the sun, and the moon, and the stars to the fever-stricken as well as to others. Kenneth had arisen to his elbow, and Viola stood in an attitude of keen attention. Immediately after the young man's caution, the pit-a-pat of muffled feet descending the stairs, was quite audible.

"Quick!" whispered Kenneth, pointing to the door. "Look!"

The young girl sprang quickly to the door, but she could neither see nor hear anything.

"Nobody there, Kenneth!" she whispered, returning to the bedside.

"And yet I am sure I heard some one," rejoined Kenneth, in a very low key. "Did not you, Viola?"

"Yes," responded the young girl, trembling with alarm. "I have overstaid the hour, Kenneth—see, 'tis quite dark!—and have been watched."

"Doubtless overheard, too," said Kenneth, in a vexed and disappointed tone. "How unfortunate at the present time, and under the present circumstances. If I were only able to get out, now, all would be well. But, perhaps, they did not hear much, and all may yet be well. We must perforce wait and see. But should they have chanced to overhear all, Viola, what course do you think they will pursue?"

"O, Kenneth, I can scarcely guess, but it will be one to separate us," murmured Viola, in an agony, as she sank down upon her knees by the side of the bed. "But whatever may happen, please, Kenneth, don't think me unmaidenly in so soon, and confidingly, trusting to a stranger's words."

"Never, never, Viola!" responded Kenneth, earnestly, as he clasped the young girl's head to his bosom. "In trusting that stranger, dear girl, you have placed your faith in one who honors you as he would his own mother were she living, and loves you better than any other earthly being."

At that moment there was a light knock upon the door. Both Kenneth and Viola started quickly. The approach of the person outside, whoever it might be, had been so quiet as to be unobserved by either of them.

A few moments of silence, only, had elapsed, when the knock was repeated, and this time a little louder than at the first.

"Viola, bid them enter," whispered Kenneth, laying himself back, and drawing up the bed-clothes so as to conceal, in part, his face. "It is best, under the circumstances, for you to speak."

"Come in, whoever knocks," said the young girl, in low and tremulous tones, for her heart was filled with the presentiment of coming evil.

The words had barely passed her lips, when one of

the Sisters, quietly, and with a cat-like movement, entered the apartment. Stationing herself just inside of the door, she appeared to wait to be addressed. A moment of silence ensued, when Viola found courage to ask—

"What does Sister Theresa desire?"

"The worthy Superior would speak with Sister Ursula," responded the intruder, never lifting her downcast eyes.

"I will come to her immediately," rejoined Viola, with a sinking heart.

But the Sister did not move.

"I will come to her immediately, I say, Sister Theresa," repeated Viola, anxious to have a parting word—for she intuitively felt that they were about to part—with the being who had so suddenly and irrevocably won her heart.

"Our worthy Superior bade me *conduct* you to her presence," responded Sister Theresa, laying marked emphasis on the word "conduct."

Viola felt that there was no alternative, and so prepared to quit the apartment. To speak with Kenneth was now out of the question. Before starting, however, she turned her face towards the cot. Her eyes, in that moment, encountered the young man's ardent gaze, and his expressive look said plainly—"hope!" Stealthily grasping her hand in his,

Kenneth pressed it earnestly ; and then Viola followed her companion from the room.

Yes, Viola, hope !—though thy path is dark, and thy sky betokens a storm, still "hope." Be thy prayer the same as that of one now dead and gone :—

> "Sweet day-star of the heart ! thou light divine !
> Immortal Hope ! be thou forever mine !"
>
> JOS. H. BUTLER.

* * * * * *

In one of the rooms of that portion of the building occupied by the Sisters of Mercy, sat the Superior, stiff, stern, severe. Without a word of explanation —without the slightest reference to any knowledge which she had so surreptitiously obtained, she said to Viola, as the young girl timidly entered the apartment :—

"Sister Ursula, this close attention upon the sick is not good for you, and will affect your health. I see it now ; and as I can dispense with your services —the fever being on the decrease—you will be glad to know that I have decided upon sending you back to the Convent, immediately ! Sister Theresa, and Sister Frances, will accompany you."

Viola understood it all, and knew it would be useless to murmur or object. That her position with Kenneth had been detected, she felt satisfied.

"You will sleep with me to-night, Sister Ursula, so that you may be prepared for an early start in the

morning," continued the Superior, who was determined not to let the young girl out of her sight, even for a moment. Then turning to Sister Theresa, she said—"Summon the Sisters for vespers."

All that night Viola was closely watched, and the following morning, accompanied by the two Sisters delegated for the duty, she departed on her journey; but not, as will hereafter be shown, entirely without hope.

CHAPTER XI.

KENNETH'S NEW NURSE.—THE DISCOVERY.—THE COUNTERPLOT.

INSTEAD, however, of at once following the course of the young girl, we will for the present remain at the hospital, and acquaint ourselves with what is transpiring there. And to understand the particulars fully we will go back to the night previous.

As Viola disappeared from the little apartment occupied by Kenneth, the youth pressed his hand to his forehead and murmured, sadly,—

"Gone! How dull and dark the place seems without her, and how bright and pleasant when she is here! Who would imagine that I should so miss her? How strange and sudden is often the workings of the heart! Ah! would that she could remain forever by my side!"

Better than life did he already love the young girl; for in that hour it indeed seemed to him, that

> "——— life without her smile would be,
> Like earth without a flower." JOS. H. BUTLER.

For long hours Kenneth—heedless of every want—

lay upon his back thinking of Viola; of the singularity of their acquaintance; of the depth of his own love; of the young girl's position; and of what course was best for him, under the circumstances, to pursue.

That he would have strong, cunning, artful opposition to contend with, he had too much good sense, and too intimate a knowledge of the character of Jesuitical Romanism to doubt. But he was brave, and when conscious that he was right, as mature deliberation convinced him he was in regard to Viola, he was unyielding.

Thus the evening passed away; and at length Kenneth began to grow nervously anxious; not for himself, but for the being into whose society he had been so strangely thrown.

It had hitherto been Viola's custom to visit him two or three times after dark, and now she had not come once. True, he was fast growing better; but what duty had at first demanded, love afterwards, in the one case, insisted upon, and in the other, prompted to. And therefore on this night he was quick to miss her attendance, and wondered at it.

"Can they really have discovered us, and prevented her coming here?" he murmured, to himself; and with the excitement of the thought he even made an effort to rise; but finding himself still too weak for such exertion, he sank back again upon the pillow.

Shortly after that a negro man, with a lighted candle in one hand and a tray of refreshments in the other, entered the apartment. Kenneth felt astonished, grieved, and vexed, at the change which he quickly comprehended. His worst suspicions, he thought to himself, were then correct.

"Who are you?" he demanded, abruptly and angrily; for, being but human, he found it impossible to repress his feelings entirely.

"Who is I, marster!" responded the negro, at the same time busying himself in arranging what things he thought were out of place around the room. "Dat am a 'kestion to ax! I'se a nigga, dat am a fac'; a poo' mis'ble nigga. Dat's so, marster!"

"Well, but what's your name?"

"O, what dey call me! Well, I'se comly called Sip; sumtimes ole marster—'specially jest arter dinna—call me, Scipio; an' sumtimes missus—who's berry perlite—she call me, Scipio Africanus. Fac', marster."

"That name and that voice! It must be the same, though by this indistinct light I cannot say for certain. I'll question him. If it turns out to be Robson's man, it will be very fortunate."

Thus Kenneth mused. Then addressing the negro, he inquired,—

"My man, who do you belong to?"

"'Long to! Why, ole Marster Robson, ohu! He's dun gone away norf, doe, till Yaller Jack leab."

"I thought I could not be mistaken," murmured Kenneth. "Here, my man," he continued, aloud, "don't you know me?"

"Well, I dunno 'zactly," responded the negro, dubiously. "Yaller Jack change de folks so funnilly, berry hard to 'nize 'em."

"Well, bring the light and come here and look at me," said Kenneth.

The negro instantly complied; and the moment his eyes rested upon the face of Kenneth, his dingy countenance lighted up.

"Well, dar!" he exclaimed, raising up his hands in wonder. "Am dat you, Marster Egaton?"

"The same, Scipio, though not quite so fresh and strong as when you last saw me."

"Well, who'd a fought dat you was in dis yere house! Ef I'd a only know'd it, Marster Egaton, I'd a bin here afore. Dat's so, now!"

"I don't doubt it, Scipio. But now tell me, what are you doing here?"

"Well, I'se a nuss. Dat is, I tends to de patients when dey am gettin' better, so dat de wimmin folks kin tend to de wusser ones. Marster, you see, he hired me to de 'forities; but I dun like de job, doe, much. Dat's so, marster Egaton."

"And you have now been sent here to wait upon me?"

"Dat's so, too, Marster Egaton. An' de high golly! but I'se glad ob it, bein' dat it's you."

"I believe you, Scipio."

Now Kenneth could not but think—and he fancied he had very good reasons for doing so—that other causes besides his apparent convalescence had induced the withdrawal of Viola; and he determined, if possible, to find them out. Scipio was the property of one of his oldest friends—a man, kind and indulgent in some respects; passionate, hasty, and tyrannical in others—and having frequently saved the negro from the lash, he felt he could safely trust to his gratitude.

"Scipio, I want to have a little talk with you," he said, addressing the negro, after a pause of a few moments, which he had occupied in the reflections just recorded.

"I'se all 'tention, Marster Egaton," rejoined the black, with every evidence of high satisfaction.

"First see that yonder door is closed tight, and then stuff something in the key-hole."

The negro opened his great eyes with wonder, but unhesitatingly did as he was directed.

"The nurses in this house, I am afraid, have a strange propensity for listening," remarked Kenneth, in explanation.

"Dat's so!" responded the negro, clapping the forefinger of his left hand against the side of his nose, and gazing into Kenneth's face with a knowing expression.

"I thought as much," rejoined the young man. "And now, Scipio, listen to me. I have a little business that I want you to attend to, and if you faithfully carry out my directions, you shall be liberally rewarded."

"Nebber mind de 'ward, Marster Egaton. I'll do it for yourse'f widout any 'ward. Dat's so, now!"

"Well, can you keep a secret?"

"Fo' shu I can, Marster Egaton."

"And will you be very faithful to my interests?"

"Marster, I'se only a mis'ble niggar, I know; but de high golly, niggar or no niggar, I know who'se dis chile's frien's. Dat's so, mine now!"

"I don't doubt it, Scipio," rejoined Kenneth, confidently. "And now tell me, do you know which Sister waited on me during my illness?"

"Not 'zactly, marster; kase, you see, dare am so many sick folks in dis house, an' so many nusses, dat I didn't pay ticklar 'tention."

"She was called Sister Ursula," pursued Kenneth. "Do you know her?"

"Not 'zactly, Marster Egaton."

"Can you find her out?"

"Fo' shu I can."

"Do so, then," continued Kenneth. "And when you have accomplished that, endeavor to find an opportunity to speak with her. Tell her then that you come from me, and she will know what reply to make you. But you must be very secret, Scipio, very."

"Trus' dis chile, Marster Egaton."

"I will, Scipio, for I know you to be both honest and quick-witted."

"I'se honest, Marster Egaton, dat's sartin," rejoined the negro. "But here am your supper. Eat sumfin', now, so dat you git strong."

"Rather a late hour for supper, Scipio," remarked Kenneth.

"Dat's so, Marster Egaton; an' I don't 'zactly 'stand why you didn't get it afore. But, howsomdever, marster, it's better late dan nebber."

Scipio had now arranged the edibles before Kenneth, and the youth fell to with an avidity that caused the negro to cry out with astonishment—

"De high golly, Marster Egaton, you soon git out o' dis yere! Dat's a fac!"

The meal finished, Scipio, with another caution as to the course he was to pursue, took up the things and quitted the apartment; and Kenneth, notwithstanding the excited condition of his mind, soon sank into a heavy slumber.

Towards midnight he was aroused from his sleep

by some one shaking him. Upon opening his eyes he beheld the negro standing over him.

"Well, Scipio, have you seen her?" he eagerly demanded, when sufficiently awake to collect his faculties.

"Not by 'siderable, marster! De ole 'oman tuk her under her 'special car, an' I know'd twar'ent no use to try whatsomdever. I've seen 'siderable of dese yere funnelly queer wimmin, an' I know'd dat de game was up in dat quarter. So I jist went waystin' roun' de house, tinkin' dat maybe I'd oberhar sumfin'. Shu enough, Marster Egaton, I did."

"And what was it, Scipio?" demanded Kenneth, excitedly. "Speak quickly, for I am all on the rack."

"I well, Marster Egaton. Up dar,"—the negro pointed overhead—"dere's a man what's jis come in, an' Jack's got him tight. Two o' dese yere nusses am in he room. I heerd dem whisperin', buz, buz, buz, so I jist fought I'd stop an' listen to de key-hole. Ebberyting was still, but sumhow I couldn't make out much, no how; but I heerd dem talkin' sumfin' 'bout de heritic, an' 'bout Sister Usuler, an' 'bout sumbody's gwain away to-morrow mornin'; but I couldn't stand who 'twas, or whar dey was gwain."

"Without a doubt it was of Viola they were speaking," responded Kenneth, partly to himself, and partly to the negro. "And so they have discovered all, and she is to be removed," he mused. "But

whither? yes, whither? That I must find out! O, that I were out of this!" Then addressing the negro, he inquired, "Scipio, is there no way of speaking with Sister Ursula to-night?"

"Not de fust chance, Marster Egaton. Mine, dat's so now, sur, or dis niggar wouldn't nebber say it."

For a few moments Kenneth was absorbed in thought.

"Scipio," he said, at length, "you must be on the watch early to-morrow morning. When Sister Ursula leaves be sure to be near at hand—if possible, endeavor to speak with her; but if you cannot accomplish that, mark well every word that is uttered. Something may transpire from which I can form an idea of the young lady's destination; and that is what I am most anxious to know."

"I'll be dar, Marster Egaton, I will."

"Very well, Scipio. Remember the directions I have given you, and be vigilant. And now, good night."

With a scrape, and a "berry good night," the negro again quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER XII.

DEPARTURE OF VIOLA FOR MT. CARMEL.—SCIPIO IN HER TRACKS.—KENNETH CONVALESCENT.

EARLY the following morning Scipio was astir, eagerly and keenly watching every movement that transpired in the building. Nothing unusual occurred, however, until some few hours later, at which time a carriage was driven up to the door. Scipio was instantly on the alert; and stationing himself in a position that enabled him to see every person who passed in or out of the house, without himself being seen, he leisurely awaited the coming events.

In a short time the vinegar-faced Superior, accompanied by Sister Theresa, Sister Frances, and Viola, made their appearance in the large hall.

"I hope that you will have a pleasant journey, Sister Ursula," remarked the Superior, in the most uncompromising manner.

"I hope so, madam," rejoined Viola, with a sadness in the tones of her voice that betokened anything but anticipated pleasure.

With that they passed on toward the front door.

"Dat am she, am it?" muttered Scipio, to himself, as he peeped out from his hiding place. "She am an angel, an' no mistake. Dat's so!"

With a noiseless movement the negro glided from his hiding place, passed out, unobserved, through the back part of the building, and headed the carriage off at the first cross street. Without attracting any attention, he jumped up behind. As soon as the carriage halted—which it did at the steamboat landing—he leaped to his feet, and with an obsequiousness entirely irresistible, proceeded to open the carriage door for the occupants to alight. In his opinion the case was getting desperate, and demanded desperate measures. He had been directed to find out Viola's destination, and he felt the last chance of doing so fast slipping through his fingers.

The females—even Viola—looked astonished at seeing him; and Sister Theresa frowningly inquired,

"What brought you after us?"

"Well, I fought dat maybe you free lone wimmin might want a little 'sistance; an' bein' as we was all nusses, I 'cluded to offer my services. Dat's so, now!" responded the negro, very innocently.

At that moment some bustle very opportunely attracted the attention of the party, during which momentary abstraction Scipio managed to give one of the horses a punch that set him rearing very vio-

lently. This created a confusion, in the midst of which the negro managed very adroitly to get close beside Viola, into whose ear he quickly whispered—

"Marster Egaton want to know whar you gwain!"

Viola cast one lightning glance at the black, and then whispered back—

"Mt. Carmel!"

The next moment the confusion subsided, and the Sisters hurried Viola away ; and though Scipio followed them in the hope of learning more, he was entirely disappointed.

* * * * * *

In the meantime Kenneth had been visited by the principal attending physician, who pronounced him out of all danger ; and shortly after the doctor's departure the old Superior herself, her sallow brow wrinkled by a deep frown, entered the apartment, and spread before the youth his morning repast. Kenneth made neither remark nor inquiry, which, from the old Superior's fidgetting, she evidently expected that he would. He was on his guard.

"The physician informs me that you will soon be in a condition to get out," at length remarked the woman, in unbending tones. "A circumstance with which you are, no doubt, highly gratified."

"Indeed I am, madam!" responded Kenneth, so earnestly as to attract the Superior's particular attention. "And who in my situation would not

be ?" he continued, with a view to qualify the energy of his first declaration.

"Ah!" ejaculated the Superior. "From the earnestness of your reply I thought that, probably, you had some particular reason for rejoicing."

Kenneth saw the point at which his interlocutor was aiming, and simply answered—

"The wish to be in good health is but natural with everybody."

A pause of several moments ensued.

"You, probably, wondered at our changing your nurse," continued the Superior, more pointedly.

"Not at all," rejoined Kenneth, truthfully; for under the circumstances, he did not wonder at it, but rather would have wondered had it been otherwise. "Doubtless you had your reasons for doing so, and it is not for me to question any arrangements that you make," he added.

The old Superior was annoyed, and defeated by Kenneth's seeming indifference, and she dropped the subject with the following remark:

"We have made it a rule to place the negro in attendance upon those patients who are recovering, so that the presence of the Sisters may be had where they are most needed."

With this indirect falsehood she swept from the room. In one view of the case, her words were true, and in another they were utterly false. Though

Viola's attention would, doubtless, soon have been withdrawn from Kenneth, yet, as we well know, there were other circumstances that hastened the change.

Immediately after the disappearance of the Superior, Scipio, as if he had been watching for her departure, entered the room.

"Well, Scipio, what news?" demanded Kenneth, eagerly. "Is the young lady gone?"

"Sister Usuler, you mean, Marster Egaton?"

"Yes!"

"Well, she am!"

"And did you learn whither?"

"Fo' shu!"

"Well, where?"

Scipio then entered into a detailed description of his morning's adventure, and Kenneth heard him through, prolix as he was, without once interrupting him.

"And so they have taken her back to Mt. Carmel!" muttered the youth, when the negro finished. "I shall follow her. And Heaven grant that I may soon have back my strength!"

Less than a week after, Kenneth Egerton quitted the fever hospital, comparatively well.

CHAPTER XIII.

VIOLA AT MT. CARMEL.—INTERVIEW WITH HER UNCLE.—GOING BACK TO THE OLD MANSION HOUSE.

THE scene of our story now changes to Mt. Carmel. Immediately after the arrival of Viola at the Convent, a full report of all that had transpired was made out and forwarded to her uncle.

A few days later and Torillo made his appearance, raging with anger and disappointment. Here was a contingency he had not looked for, and he was as furious at those who had permitted it to occur, as he was at Viola for unconsciously profiting by it. He instantly foresaw that all hope of inducing his niece to take the vail, was at an end. As yet, however, he had resolved upon nothing, further than to take her home.

The apartment in which the uncle and niece communicated together was quite diminutive, and presented, altogether—to one unused to such places, at least—a somewhat singular appearance ;—three sides being white-washed wall, while the fourth was com-

posed of a grating similar to those which may be seen in prisons. The floor was uncarpeted; and in the way of furniture it contained only a few ancient and worn chairs. From behind the before-mentioned grating, it was customary for the abbess and the nuns to converse with visitors. On this occasion, however, and in consideration of Torillo's position and influence, Viola made her appearance outside of the grating.

At the first sound of the young girl's steps, the designing Jesuit smoothed his angry brow, and again prepared to play the hypocrite.

"I must get her home," he muttered to himself, "and it will not do to frighten her now, or she may give me trouble on the road. Once *there*, and I will put an end to this trifling. There are dungeons under the old house as safe as the grave; and if she will do as she pleases she must take the consequences. Have her out of the way, somehow, I will, I *must*, and that quickly."

"Uncle, I am come," said Viola as she entered the apartment; and as she spoke she cast an anxious glance at Torillo's face. But there was nothing there to indicate what was passing in his mind. As to her he had always appeared, so was he now—kind, considerate and loving.

"You are looking well, Viola," he said. "A little pale, it is true, but well; notwithstanding the

harassing scenes through which you must have lately passed."

Viola trembled, and with a nervous start made answer,—

"I am glad you think so, uncle!"

"She trembles at the merest approach to the subject," said her uncle, mentally. "They were not then deceived, and it is as they represented. My course is plain. I will seem to be in ignorance of all that has transpired, and treat her as though nothing unusual had occurred." Then turning to the young girl, he said, aloud,—"Well, my dear child, your year of probation has almost expired. And how stands it with you, now? Is your mind yet made up to carry out your mother's last request, or are you still decided to the contrary?"

Torillo spoke kindly; but not, however, with any hope to induce Viola to now immure herself in a Convent, but only to mislead her.

His inquiry was followed by several moments of silence, during which the young girl was inwardly seeking strength to speak her mind—as she now felt impelled to—freely. Two things she dreaded greatly, however—her uncle's anger, and the fear that her own conscience would afterwards upbraid her for paying so little attention to her mother's wish. And that the former was fearful when aroused—and might not her persevering opposition to what was evidently

his wish because it was her mother's, arouse it?—she knew full well, though never yet had it lighted on her young head. She had always dreaded the moment that it ever should.

At length she answered her uncle, slowly, calmly, but with a great effort.

"It is best, uncle, that you should wholly understand my feelings on this point," she said. "And that I have considered the subject, deeply, day and night, in tears and in sorrow, there should be, can be, no doubt in your mind."

"I hear you, Viola," rejoined Torillo, calmly and mildly.

"From the first, uncle, I have looked with horror on a Convent life," continued the young girl, summoning up all her energy. "I cannot tell what actuated me at the first, but the feeling has long been deeply rooted in my heart. And now, uncle, reflection convinces me that it is both sinful and unnatural for any human being to thus sequester themselves."

"Even already is she more than half a heretic!" said Torillo, within himself. Then addressing Viola, he said with seeming indifference,—"Go on, my child, I am listening to you."

How mildly he spoke! And in that moment who would have dreamed of all that lay beneath the surface?

"For my mother's wish, uncle, I am deeply grieved,"

continued Viola. "Living, I never disobeyed her, youthful as I was when she died. I can well remember that; and to do so now, even though she is not here to know it, gives me greater pain than I can find words to express."

"Why do so, then?" demanded Torillo.

Viola answered with an energy her uncle had never before seen her exhibit—

"Because all my heart! all my soul! all my nature, cries out against the sacrifice!" she exclaimed. "Because I believe that my mother, were she now living, would revoke the cruel sentence—because I feel that either the dark shadows of the grave warped her understanding, or some fear of the living influenced her mind, when thus she consigned me, her darling, only child, to the fate of such a living tomb. And for this disregard of my mother's wish, I am sure the Almighty Searcher of human hearts will forgive me, for He, at least, need not be told that I am honest in my convictions, and mean well by what I do."

"The child is no longer a child," thought Torillo. "And this is, partly, the work of that accursed fever-struck heretic. Maledictions on his soft tongue! And does he think thus to step in between me and my purposes with impunity? Let him look to himself if we should ever chance to meet." Then speaking aloud, he said to Viola,—"From this time,

my child, I am to infer that your decision is adverse to your mother's wishes?"

"For the present, uncle, yes!" responded Viola, but not without an anxious fear for the result.

"For the *present!*" Torillo repeated, mentally and bitterly. "She *fears* to say out boldly that she will not." Then again addressing the young girl, he continued, kindly and softly,—"Well, well, my dear child, I shall not urge you any more. And this being your resolve, it is useless to remain here. Let us, then, return home. Indeed I can scarcely say, to tell the real truth, but that in my heart I am *now* pleased with your determination," he continued, with a sublimity of hypocrisy. "Since you have been away, my child, the old house has seemed particularly dull and stupid; and I must confess that lately I have often wished you back again."

Viola was confounded. She had fully expected to behold an outburst of violence, and here was her uncle's demeanor unruffled—nay, more, he was positively kind. She could not see the storm that was raging in his heart, and which policy, only, prevented from breaking forth. Still she had her misgivings; for, under the circumstances, his calmness, and kindness, and indifference, seemed altogether unnatural. She was well aware that both her language and her conduct implied, among other things, a backsliding from the Holy Church, and she knew that that

offence alone, leaving out every other consideration, was of sufficient magnitude to arouse her uncle's displeasure. What to think she knew not. And if her uncle was acquainted with the episode between herself and Kenneth Egerton, his conduct was yet more incomprehensible. He had not hinted at any such thing, however, and the whole course of his conduct implied to the contrary. And yet that he should not have been informed of the circumstances appeared utterly improbable. Thus was Viola harassed with doubts, and fears, and perplexities.

"You do not answer me, my child!" continued Torillo, after a few moments of silence, which Viola had spent in the reflections recorded above, and her uncle in watching her expressive face. "Shall we go back to the old house?"

"Yes, uncle," responded Viola; though with a reluctance she could neither account for nor conceal. Situated as she then was, she felt that she had little choice in the matter.

"Then away at once and get ready!" cried Torillo, cheerily.

As soon as the young girl was alone she clasped her hands together, and in the anguish of her spirit, cried aloud—

"O, Kenneth, Kenneth, where are you? Come to me—come to me, dear Kenneth, for I feel that soon I shall need your presence!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE WAY.—THE ENCOUNTER ON THE ROAD.

SHORTLY after Viola had quitted the apartment to prepare for the journey home, her uncle summoned the aged porteress to his presence.

"I shall take my niece, Viola, home with me!" he said, speaking abruptly, and in quite a contrast with his former manner. "Should any one call here and ask to see her—especially a young naval officer—neither tell them that she is, or is not, in the building. Keep them in darkness as to her whereabouts. I have reasons—all-sufficient ones. I have already stated my wishes to the Abbess."

While Torillo had been addressing the porteress—and during the time thus occupied he stood with his back toward the door—Viola, with that noiseless step acquired in such institutions, had entered the apartment. Consequently she had overheard the greater part of what he had said; and a wise forethought prompted her to withdraw from the room before her presence was discovered. This she suc-

cessfully accomplished, and when again outside the door, she paused a few moments to reflect upon what had thus been revealed. Her uncle had said enough to convince her that he knew of her love; but why he had refrained from even referring to it she could not imagine. That his silence betokened some scheme, and boded her no good, she was almost prepared to admit. And the thought agitated her immensely. After a few moments, however, she calmed down her feelings, and first making a noise to attract attention, she reëntered the apartment.

The young girl had now laid aside the peculiar dress of her order, and donned another more befitting a Christian, civilized woman; and notwithstanding her mental anxiety, she presented a lovely picture.

"All ready, my child?" inquired Torillo, stepping toward her as she entered the room.

"Quite, uncle."

Then taking the young girl's hand, he led her forth into the air. In front of the Convent a carriage was standing, and as Torillo handed his niece in, he said,

"To-night, my child, we will sleep at a friend's house in Baltimore; and early to-morrow morning start for the old homestead."

"Thank God, that we go not directly home!" Viola ejaculated, inwardly. "I may yet find some

means of communicating with Kenneth, and informing him of this change."

From his niece Torillo turned to the driver and whispered—

"You know your directions. Drive fast, and avoid all encounters on the road."

The next moment they were speeding forward, and in a little time the Convent was left in the distance.

As soon as the carriage was in motion, Torillo drew up the little windows and dropped the curtains, thus preventing those within from seeing out, and any one passing from seeing in. There was something in all this that caused Viola to feel very uneasy; but, still, she was apparently an indifferent spectator.

After speeding on for some time, a single horseman, who was coming from the direction in which they were going, drew up across the road, and hailed the driver to stop. Involuntarily the latter held up a little.

"Friend," demanded the horseman, "am I on the right road to the Convent of Mt. Carmel?"

"Shure, an' ye are that same, sur!" responded the hackman, who at the same moment appeared to bethink himself of something, and gathered up his reins for a start.

"And how far am I from it?"

"Well, about five miles, more or less."

At the first sound of the horseman's voice, Viola had started, and alternately flushed and turned pale; but, still, with admirable presence of mind, under the circumstances, had remained quiet. Her uncle's quick eye, however, detected her emotion, and seeming to guess at the cause, he shouted to the hackman—

"Drive on, sir!"

Again the carriage sped on, and the horseman was left standing in the road. Torillo buried his face in his bosom, and preserved the most profound silence; and the young girl wisely forbore making any allusion to the interruption. In fact, her heart and mind were too full to speak, for well she recognized the voice of Kenneth Egerton, and guessed his errand at the Convent. He was in pursuit of herself. And he had been so near to her, knowing it not, and she afraid to discover her presence.

And on, and on, went the carriage.

CHAPTER XV.

KENNETH AT MT. CARMEL.—ANOTHER SPY.

A HALF hour, or thereabouts, afterwards, and Kenneth Egerton was standing in the hall of the Convent. His horse he had tied to a tree some little distance down the road. Behind a small grating sat the old porteress.

"Madam, I desire to see Sister Ursula on business of importance," he said, assuming a confident air, and hoping by that means to compass his desires.

The old woman eyed her interlocutor, mumbled over something about "naval officer," and then said aloud:—

"She is not to be seen, young man, so you had better go away."

"Not to be seen!" cried out Kenneth, impatiently. "And why not? Is this a prison? What crime has she committed that she has been condemned to solitary confinement?"

"I only repeat my orders, sir. She is not to be seen. Why, is not for me to say. Perhaps she is

preparing herself to take the black vail," responded the old porteress, maliciously.

"If that be true," continued Kenneth, sternly, "she is being forced."

"Forced!" ejaculated the old woman, with a very great display of astonishment;—"we never force any body, young man!"

"O, no!" responded Kenneth, bitterly, and contemptuously;—"you *never* force any body—you *never* do any thing wrong—never! You are spotless saints in your own estimation, but something more human, and far less pure, in the opinion of every body else."

"The Virgin preserve us, young man, how you do talk!" cried the old porteress, with every show of horror.

"Can I speak with any of your Superiors?" demanded Kenneth, angrily and impatiently.

"If you wish to, I suppose you can."

"I do wish to! nor will I quit this building until I have had such an interview," rejoined Kenneth, determinedly.

"I will inform the abbess," mumbled the toothless old woman, as she disappeared from her box.

The few moments that she was absent were occupied by Kenneth in bringing his thoughts into better shape.

When the old porteress reappeared she pointed her

shrivelled finger to a side door opening from the hall, and said,—

"Walk in there, young man."

Kenneth followed her directions, and found himself in the general receiving room. By the time he had taken a slight survey of the apartment, the abbess—a tall, severe, unbending looking woman—made her appearance behind the grating which we have heretofore noticed.

"Your business?" she demanded, fixing upon Kenneth her piercing gray eyes.

"To see one known in this place as Sister Ursula," responded the young man, as respectfully as his swelling heart would permit. "Can I be allowed that privilege?"

"You cannot, sir!"

"And why not?" demanded Kenneth, by an effort choking down his anger and his disappointment.

"Because her family will it so!" responded the abbess; the truth, at that moment, at least, answering quite as well as a falsehood. "Our orders were, that while she was here we should not admit any stranger to her presence."

"Then she *is* here still!" said Kenneth, quickly.

"I did not say so," rejoined the abbess, with a slight sneer.

"Your words implied as much, madam!"

The young man was losing his patience, fast.

"Did they?"

"Yes, madam, they did!" shouted Kenneth hotly, all the pent up indignation of his soul bursting wildly forth;—"and, so help me Heaven, I will not rest quiet until I know for certain where she is, and have an interview with her. You may hide her away in the deepest dungeon—guard her with all that vigilance for which you have been famous from the darkest period of the world, and yet will I find a way to reach her, and save her. Save her, madam, I repeat! For, under Heaven, I believe that there is some conspiracy afoot to wrong that young girl. I cannot fathom it yet, but if there be ingenuity in man I soon will. Nor shall Monk, Priest, nor Abbess —Convent walls, nor secret dungeons, nor threats of vengeance, deter me in the pursuit of my object. Unscrupulous as you all are, base as you have ever been, bigoted and blood-thirsty as all past time has proven you to be, what, but falsehood, and wrong, and blood, could be expected from you, ever? Still I bid you pause ere you harm this young girl, or even compel her into a life at which her soul revolts. Protestant America is not Catholic Europe, nor the nineteenth century a day in which such deeds may be committed with impunity. Look to it, madam, look to it!"

"Peace, idle, vaunting man!" cried the abbess, her bosom heaving, and her eyes flashing lightning

glances. "Profane not these sacred walls with your impious threats!"

"Sacred walls!" responded Kenneth, scornfully. Then changing his tone to one of deep indignation, he continued—"If from any one place more than another the cry of wrong and violence ascends up to high Heaven—if one spot more than another is a sink of iniquity—that place is a Convent. And if the Great Ruler of the universe, to whom *all* hidden things are laid bare, frowns more darkly upon one spot of earth than another, it is upon that spot desecrated by a Convent's walls. O, well may the deeds done—the things said—the thoughts thought, in such places, be hidden behind a vail of mystery and darkness. Were they God-like—were they Christian-like—were they even honest, they would be fit for every human eye to gaze upon—for every living creature to know. But, thank God! the day is not far distant when the American people, at least, will awake to their true character—when these dens of cunning, treacherous, conspiring men and women—these sinks of vice, and sensuality, and lasciviousness, will be held up before the public gaze in all their naked and unredeeming deformity. Fare you well, Madam Abbess; and lay you deeply to heart what I have said."

Kenneth dashed from the apartment, and flew past the astonished porteress into the open air. In an

instant's time he was in the saddle, and dashing off like wild on the road to Baltimore.

As he rushed from the apartment, the Abbess, her bosom surging with the deepest passion, quitted her place, behind the grating, and passed hastily through a door into an adjoining apartment. At the same time she called aloud, in the most intense and excited tones—

"Miguel! Miguel!"

A long-coated, half-shaven priest, of a sinister aspect, quickly responded to her summons.

Pointing through an open window, she exclaimed—

"Miguel, change your dress speedily—then mount and follow that man who was just here. You saw him?"

"Yes!"

"He has taken the road to Baltimore. Find out where he stops, and then hasten to Father Antonio's. You will find Pedro Torillo there. Tell him a youth, in the undress uniform of the United States Navy, has been here—he will recognize the person—that he demanded to see Sister Ursula, and on being refused, denounced the Church and all her servants in the most violent manner, swearing solemnly that he would never rest a moment until he had found the Sister for whom he inquired. Tell him this, and tell him, too, that I say it were best to *silence* this meddling glib-tongued heretic. Away with you, now!"

The Abbess spoke with lightning rapidity, and in a very brief time after, the metamorphosed shaveling was in the saddle, fairly flying down the road which Kenneth had taken.

Stationed at the window—which overlooked for some distance the road to the city of Baltimore—she watched her messenger until he was out of sight. As he finally faded from view, she muttered bitterly, her thoughts running on Kenneth,—

"The prating fool! He may yet learn, to his cost, what it is to insult and defy the servants of the Church."

CHAPTER XVI.

VIOLA A PRISONER AT THE PRIEST'S HOUSE IN BALTIMORE.—THE LAY JESUIT AND THE TWO PRIESTS CONSPIRING AGAINST KENNETH.

In a back third-story room of an old-fashioned house, on one of the by-streets of Baltimore, still later in the day, was Viola Hastings.

The two windows of the room looked out upon a cluster of yards, and were, of course, of too great a height from the ground to admit of the young girl conversing with any one beneath, even if she would have been so imprudent as to attempt such a measure.

The moment she was alone, Viola sank into a chair, and, for a time, communed with herself as her varied and conflicting emotions dictated.

"It was Kenneth, I know," she murmured. "Brief as has been our acquaintance, I would recognize the tones of his voice among a thousand. And he is searching for me. Will he discover my retreat? O, I fear not! And what can I do?" After a thought-

ful pause she continued: "In my heart I feel a presentiment that some wrong is intended me, and yet I cannot tell what. Why will not this cloud lift, and let me see beyond? Something is being done—some mischief is intended me which I cannot penetrate. Why else this constant watching, and these secret movements? For some reason or other, I begin to think I must have an enemy. But who can it be? My uncle? I almost fear so. But why? O, why? What have I ever done to make him my enemy?" After another thoughtful pause she again continued: "Perhaps they fear that I will desert the Church, and would prevent it! But if so, why take me back to the mansion house? Why not have kept me at the Convent when I was there?" Then again she paused, and at length again murmured, clasping her hands tightly together—"O, Kenneth, Kenneth, would you were here! No longer then should I hesitate in my course. Alone and unaided, I am powerless. That my every movement is watched, I know; and that I cannot escape, I feel certain. Here, too, I am as badly off as before, for they have placed me at the top of the house, out of all reach. Doubtless, too, the door is locked."

Viola passed across the room to the door, turned the knob and pulled—but vainly.

"Even so," she murmured. "Everywhere I go I am now watched and guarded."

From the door she turned to the window, and for a few moments silently looked out upon the yards.

"To appeal to the neighbors would be dangerous," she continued at length; "for I cannot guess which way their sympathies tend, and they may betray instead of assisting me. To trust the house domestics would also be a risk I dare not run. O, what *shall* I do? where *shall* I turn?"

During the same time that these and other similar thoughts were revolving in Viola's mind, her uncle and Father Antonio were closeted together. The two soon understood each other; for they were brothers in the same scheming, mysterious society, and both designing, hypocritical and unscrupulous men.

To his companion Torillo gave a full and clear account of his guardianship of his niece, exposing his whole plan and objects without reservation; only, however, adding a little more than was exactly the truth. Boldly he declared his intention of appropriating her whole estate, even if to do so he had to deprive her of life. To the Society he expressed his intention of giving the half, keeping the rest himself. That was only a 'blind,' however; for, as we have elsewhere remarked, these men are as constantly cheating each other, as they are any one else.

And all this his priestly companion applauded to the echo.

"And now more than ever am I resolved," said Torillo, in conclusion. "I look upon the apostate girl—for in her heart she is really little less—with no more favor than a born heretic; and it is always right, you know, to crush the enemies of the Church. What though she is my niece? my sister's child? Shall that save her? is that any reason why I should let her wealth, more than another's, pass into the hands of some accursed heretic?"

"No!" rejoined Father Antonio, deeply.

What else he would have said is not certain, for at that moment there was a knock upon the door.—Father Antonio broke off abruptly, arose, unlocked the door, and opened it. The next moment the messenger of the Abbess entered the apartment, his person bearing all the marks of hard travel. In a few, earnest, but telling words, he communicated his message, winding up by saying that the man he had followed and watched, had stopped at —— Hotel.

"And is he *here!*" muttered Torillo, intensely. "He has recovered quickly; but let him look to himself."

"Is it the young man you have just spoken of?" queried Father Antonio.

"The same, I suppose, was the response. "He is in full pursuit of Viola; but he must be stopped *here*, right off. By the holy cross, but the Abbess

shall find us no laggards! Come hither, close. Let us talk upon the subject."

Then the three drew up together into a knot, and entered into a low, earnest conversation.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DECOY.—THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION.

THE evening of the day on the afternoon of which the foregoing incident occurred was clear, balmy and starlight, but quite dark. It was September, and never did the soft breezes of that glorious season waft a sweeter perfume.

Just as the numerous bells of the city were pealing forth eight o'clock, Kenneth Egerton emerged from the door of his hotel. His manner was thoughtful, and his movements undecided. On the last of the flight of steps he halted, and turned his gaze alternately up and down the busy street. A moment after the young man's appearance, a woman drew out from the shadow of the adjoining houses, and approached him. Unconsciously he turned and looked at her, but so muffled up was her face that the view was entirely unsatisfactory. Still nearer she drew to him, however, until at length they touched each other.

"Are you looking for any one, my good woman?" inquired Kenneth, at length.

"Is your name Egerton? Lieutenant Kenneth Egerton?" responded the woman, in a whisper; having first satisfied herself, by a lightning glance, that they were unobserved.

"It is."

"Then I was sent for you."

"By whom?"

"Viola, sir."

Kenneth started as if an electric shock had flashed through his whole system. The woman smiled, though unseen. She was sure of success, and her triumph displayed itself in the curling of her lips.

"Viola!" exclaimed the youth, excitedly. "Do you know her?"

"How else could I name her, sir?"

"Have you seen her? Is she here? Where is she now?" demanded Kenneth, volubly.

"Follow me, and you shall be satisfied," responded the woman, turning half round, and moving on a step or two. "She waits you."

A moment's pause, during which Kenneth measured the woman from head to foot.

"But how do I know that you are not deceiving me?" he said, hesitatingly. "What assurance have I of that?"

"Do you fear?" responded the woman, scornfully.

"FEAR!"

Kenneth spoke quickly and angrily, and then was silent. After a pause of a few moments he continued, calmly—

"Yes, I fear somethings. The man who says he fears nothing, is at heart a braggart and a coward."

"But you have no cause to fear," continued the woman. "Are not you armed?"

"Armed! Yes, with these weapons, and these only," responded Kenneth, stretching forth his hands.

"All's well!" said the woman to herself.

"Have you no token from her whom you say sent you?" inquired Kenneth, as anxious to believe the woman as he was to see Viola, and yet, very naturally, inclined to be suspicious of her truth.

"I have not," responded the woman, with a great show of sincerity. "Most likely Miss Hastings did not foresee such a contingency. But, perhaps, I can satisfy you in some other manner."

In quick tones the muffled female then described the appearance of Viola, and the nature of Kenneth's acquaintance with her.

"I will trust you," responded the young man, when the woman had finished, misled by the accuracy of her information. "Lead on, now!"

The muffled woman instantly started off, Kenneth following a few feet behind her. In a little while

they emerged from the more populous part of the city into the suburbs. The light, and bustle, and noise were soon left behind, and silence and darkness reigned around. Kenneth began again to have doubts; and while he was debating in his mind the propriety of the step he had taken, the woman came to a halt and awaited his approach.

"The road is getting very lonely, sir," she said, as Kenneth came up with her; "and I will walk by your side, now, if you have no objection."

"None at all," rejoined Kenneth. "But whither are you leading me? Viola cannot, surely, be in this part of the city."

"She is staying at a little country seat, just beyond the limits, sir," responded the woman. "We shall soon be there, now."

After walking on a little further, they passed two muffled men, who were standing in the shadow of an old deserted tenement. In that locality everything was as quiet, and as dark as the grave, and the houses were old, decayed, and ricketty. Kenneth now recalled to mind the circumstance—a somewhat singular one, too—of the woman having inquired whether or not he was armed; and for the first time he regretted that he had not taken such a precaution.

They had gone on but a few steps only, after seeing the two men, when his conductor suddenly turned her head round and glanced back. The two men had

now emerged from the alley, and were silently following them. Kenneth had observed the woman's quick backward glance, and now thoroughly suspicious, he demanded—

"Why do you look back, madam?"

"To see if—*all's well!*" responded the woman, uttering the three first words in a whisper, and the two last sufficiently loud to be heard by the men in the rear, or any one else within an equal distance.

"By Heaven, but I believe that was a signal!" cried Kenneth, laying his hand quickly upon the woman's shoulder.

The words had barely passed his lips when his guide, who was of good size, and as events proved of considerable strength—cast her arms around his body, and uttered a scream of terror. Then followed the cry of,

"Save me! save me! He will kill me! he will kill me!"

Kenneth was astounded, and vainly struggled to free himself from the woman's strong grasp. At the same moment, and before the echo of her words had died away, the two men behind dashed forward.

"Betrayed! betrayed!" muttered Kenneth, still struggling in the advantageous grasp of the woman.

"O, save me! save me! save me!" repeated the woman, as the two men approached the spot.

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"We'll do that quickly, madam!" rejoined one of the men. "Upon him, partner, upon him!"

"Cowards! cowards!" cried Kenneth, passionately, still struggling to free himself from the woman, whose weight clogged all his movements.

As he uttered the words the men seized him by the throat; while, with their disengaged hands they drew their weapons from among the folds of their clothing. Kenneth could not but comprehend their murderous intentions, and attempted to cry aloud for help, but before a sound issued from his lips their arms were drawn back and had again descended with deadly velocity. At the moment the blows were given the woman let go her hold.

"Away!" cried one of the assassins; and she drew her hood closer down over her face, and fled in the direction she had brought Kenneth.

At the same moment Kenneth fell heavily to the ground, muttering as he sank down,—

"Murdered! murdered!"

"His race is run," whispered one of the men, stooping down and peering into the young man's face.

"Accursed heretic," responded the other, spurning the body with his foot, "let him rot! He will not again trouble Viola, rail at the Church, or cross my plans. My blow never yet failed me, Miguel, and I don't think it has done so now."

"Besides, there is my knife buried at least six

inches in his body," rejoined Miguel, pointing to Kenneth's prostrate form.

While Miguel had been speaking, Torillo—for it was he—had stooped down over Kenneth, and was gazing in his face.

"His face is ghastly, his skin clammy, his breathing almost imperceptible," murmured the assassin. "We did not bungle, Miguel. Curse him!" he continued, slapping the cold white cheek of the youth, and at the same moment rising to his feet. Then gazing around, he again went on,—"But come, Miguel, we must away. Here come people who have been aroused by the fracas, and we must not be seen."

The two men then dashed down a narrow, dark cross-street, and in a moment were out of sight.

At a later hour in the evening, Pedro Torillo, Father Antonio, and Miguel, the messenger of the Abbess of the Convent of Mt. Carmel, were closeted together.

They were again talking earnestly.

"You did the work, *certain!*" said Father Antonio, appealing to the other two.

Torillo and Miguel nodded affirmatively.

"So perish every such meddler!" he continued, sternly.

"They should, could I have my way with them!" rejoined Torillo, savagely.

"The enemies of the Holy Church deserve no mercy!" chimed in Miguel.

"Our brother, here," continued Torillo, pointing to Miguel, and addressing Father Antonio—"will have good news to carry our worthy Abbess."

"Aye, that he will!" responded Father Antonio.

"She will be glad to know that the foul-mouthed heretic has been made to answer for his words—words that were alike an outrage upon the Church, and an insult to herself!" responded Miguel, confidently; as if his bosom were the repository of all the woman's thoughts. And for what we know, such was the case.

"And now to bed!" said Father Antonio, at length. "You must be weary."

With that, these three faithful servants of the Holy Church separated.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VIOLA'S LETTER.—THE STRANGE CARRIER.

At an early hour the following morning, Miguel quitted the house on his way back to the Convent.

About the same time, Viola, who had slept but little during the night, took a seat at one of the windows of her room, first raising the sash up to admit the fresh, invigorating air. She was very pale; and her countenance was stamped with the traces of deep anxiety. The soft breeze of the morning played about her feverish brow, but seemed to afford her no relief. How true it is that for a mind diseased there is only one remedy! and in Viola's case that medicine was beyond her reach. In her hand she held a letter, upon the superscription of which she was intently gazing.

"To Lieut. Kenneth Egerton, Baltimore," she read. Then after a pause she continued,—"It is written, but how shall I convey it to him? I dare not trust any of these around me, and if it were

otherwise, I know not where Kenneth is. He may not even be in the city, for all that I really know."

At that moment the door of the room was quietly opened, and the very woman who had the evening previous enticed Kenneth Egerton to follow her, entered the apartment. In her hand she carried a tray of edibles.

With a quick motion Viola concealed the letter.

"Your breakfast, miss," said the woman, pleasantly.

"Thank you," responded Viola coldly. "Set it down."

The woman complied, and Viola then inquired—

"But why am I not permitted to show myself at the table?"

"I guess for no particular reason," responded the woman, with every show of the most thorough innocence. "I heard your uncle say that probably you would be tired, and maybe like to breakfast in your own room, and so I brought it to you. He bid me, when I came away, tell you, that he would soon be ready to start."

"I shall be prepared," rejoined Viola. Then after a slight pause she asked—"Why was my door locked on the outside last night? Perhaps you can tell me that!" and the young girl fixed her eyes on the immobile countenance of the artful woman.

"Indeed, I cannot say, Miss," replied the woman,

very innocently. "It is strange that it should be locked. Are you quite sure that it was? You know doors stick sometimes."

"I am quite sure that it was, for I tried it well."

"A fortunate precaution, then," said the woman, to herself. "The bird would probably have flown had its cage been open." Then addressing Viola, she said,—

"It is very singular, Miss; but probably it was done through mistake. I will make inquiry of the domestics."

"A falsehood!" exclaimed Viola, mentally. "It was done to prevent me from escaping, or communicating with any one outside." Then addressing the woman, she inquired,—

"Madam, may I ask what position you hold in this household?"

"Certainly, Miss," rejoined the woman, as pleasantly as before, though, for a moment, a dark, bitter look rested upon her brow. "I am housekeeper. Anything further, Miss?"

"That is all."

The housekeeper then quitted the room, and as she disappeared through the door, Viola murmured, pityingly,—

"Poor, degraded creature!"

For awhile after this, Viola sat buried in deep thought. Suddenly she raised her face from her

hands, and the light of a new idea flitted visibly across her features.

"If I could but get the letter to the post-office," she murmured, "then, indeed, might it reach his hands. But how, how am I to accomplish that? Is there no way open for me? None!"

Again she buried her face in her hands, and racked her brain with the useless endeavor to discover some plan of communicating with her lover. While thus absorbed, a beautiful white pigeon alighted upon the sill of the open window. Its cooing aroused her. Lifting her head, she fixed her eyes upon it, with painful anxiety. In that moment some inward monitor suggested to her that the bird might be useful to her plan. She had heard of such things before. While these thoughts were passing through her mind the bird flew into the room. Viola quickly lowered the window, and having made a prisoner of the little creature, paused a moment to collect her thoughts.

"It is my only chance," she murmured, at length. "The moment for our departure is near at hand, and I cannot leave the city without making some attempt to let Kenneth know of my whereabouts. Unless I do, he will doubtless think me still at the Convent; and while he is watching for me here, Heaven only knows what fate may overtake me; for now, if never before, I mistrust my uncle, and all. If I tie this letter around the bird's neck, and then set it free, there

is every chance of its alighting in some place where it will soon attract attention. That the letter will then, by some means or other, reach Kenneth, I can only hope. Situated as I am, it is the best and only thing I can do."

After some little difficulty, Viola succeeded in catching the bird, and having securely fastened the letter around its neck by a ribbon, which she took from her person, she turned to the window. The sound of light footsteps upon the stairs set her heart palpitating, and accelerated her movements. Raising the window quickly, but noiselessly, she held the bird out in the air.

"Heaven speed you safely, sweet bird!" she murmured, opening her hands and setting it free.

While yet watching the flight of her dumb messenger, the door of the apartment opened, and the housekeeper entered the room. Casting a quick glance around, she inquired,—

"What noise was that I heard, Miss?"

"I raised the sash a moment since," rejoined Viola. "Probably it was that. But why do you ask? Would a little noise in my room be out of the way?"

"O, no, Miss," responded the housekeeper, again assuming a pleasant tone and easy manner. "I only asked out of curiosity. Woman's inquisitiveness, you

know, is proverbial. But I came up to tell you that your uncle was ready to start. He awaits you."

"Lead the way," replied Viola. "I am all ready. I need but little preparation."

The woman instantly turned upon her heel and quitted the apartment, simply saying, "This way;" and Viola followed on immediately behind her.

Torillo received his niece kindly—asked after her health—inquired how she had spent the night, and spoke joyously of the prospect of soon being home. And Father Antonio shook her by the hand, and bestowed upon her his parting benediction. To all, Viola answered briefly, for she more than doubted their sincerity.

A few hours later they landed in Philadelphia.

* * * * * * * * * *

Before pursuing the thread of our story we will briefly state how Viola had been enabled to indite the letter which we have seen her dispatch in such a singular manner; otherwise it may seem somewhat strange. Unprepared for the reception of a prisoner—for such, to all intents and purposes, the young girl was—Father Antonio had forgotten, or overlooked, some apparently unimportant objects; through which omission Viola had successfully accomplished her purpose. It was, of course, Torillo's policy to keep every description of writing materials out of her reach, for fear that she might use them to his disad-

vantage ; and the first question he asked Father Antonio, after Viola had been conducted to her room, was to that effect. The old priest assured him that there was nothing of the description in her apartment, and he was really—or, otherwise, he surely would not have said so—under that impression. But woman's wit, generally, is keen enough at all times ; and circumstances of love or danger invariably sharpen it. Though young in years, and inexperienced in the ways of the world, Viola, as will be seen, was up to the standard of her sex.

Quite naturally, Viola's paramount desire was to communicate with her lover. To do that she must have writing materials, and to obtain them in the Convent was out of the question. The first chance, therefore, that she had had, was on her arrival at Father Antonio's house, and that seemed a very slim one. But "where there's a will there's a way ;" and as soon as she discovered that she was locked in her apartment, she set to work to rummaging the room and the closets, of which latter there were two in the apartment. After much searching, she discovered a package of old letters, and a stump of a pen ; but no where could she find anything in the shape of writing fluid. This was unfortunate, but she finally mastered the difficulty by pricking one of her fingers, and letting the blood drop in her pen ; and on one of the old letters she had found blank paper enough to

answer her purpose ; and from the budget she had collected sufficient wax to secure her own precious epistle.

Who will say that the persevering girl did not merit success ?

CHAPTER XIX.

KENNETH'S ESCAPE.

WHILST Viola is on the road to Philadelphia, we will go back to the night previous, and retrace our steps to the scene of the assassination.

Kenneth, it will be remembered, sank to the ground, murmuring, "murdered! murdered!" and the two assassins fled at the approach of several persons, whose appearance, the murderers themselves were the first to descry.

The youth had fallen in such a position that he could plainly see the retreating men, though their forms were so disguised as to render the chance of recognizing them next to impossible. As soon as the outlines of their persons had began to grow indistinct —and that was almost in a moment—he raised himself—though evidently with some labor—into a crouching posture, and gazed around.

"The rascals think they have finished me!" he murmured. "But, unless my feelings deceive me, they are greatly mistaken. Wounded I may be—

faint and half sick I certainly am—but not to the death. This now is the work of the Holy Church; and these men, and that woman, were its agents. I have already rendered myself obnoxious, and am a marked man. Well, well, we shall see. One thing is certain, however, I am not beaten yet, though they, apparently, think so. 'Twas a fortunate thought in me shamming dead. Had I not dropped as I did they might have struck me again, and more fatally. As it is, I deceived them nicely. As the poet says, 'where the lion's skin falls short we must eke it out with the fox's.'"

While these thoughts were flitting through Kenneth's mind he had arisen to his feet, and by the time he had finished thinking them, he was some distance from the spot where he had fallen.

All this had transpired in a few moments' time, and before the persons approaching the scene of the fracas had reached the spot. In that vicinity the cry of murder was not an unusual one, and at no time attracted particular attention, much less any sympathy. The few individuals who had been tempted out of the surrounding buildings by the woman's scream, approached the spot quite leisurely. They could see nothing, however, but Kenneth, in the distance, and he had now reached a point to which the alarm had not extended.

"I say, look-a-'ere, you'ser!" shouted one of the

denizens after Kenneth, and the words were barely audible to the ears of the latter ;—" Vere ar' ye goin' ? an' vot ave ye dun vith that voman vot screamed so orfully ? Did ye cut her vizzen, ole feller ?"

Kenneth hastened his steps, murmuring as he did so—

" I was blind or I would have seen where I was going. One of the worst localities in the city. But I believed the woman, so did the magic name of Viola delude me. Thank God that I have not fallen a victim to my own credulity ! It is lucky for me, however, that I was not able to cry out for help, as I was first impelled to, for all the help that I would have got here, would have been most likely on the other side."

In a few minutes Kenneth emerged into a better part of the city, and after a little while longer he reached his hotel. Shunning observation as much as possible, he hastened to his room, there to examine the condition of his wounds.

" Not serious, thank an All-merciful Providence !" he murmured ; having divested himself of his upper garments, and carefully examined the only wound upon his body, which was under his left arm.

The reason why he had thus escaped was obvious. The blade of Miguel's knife—the messenger had been on the right of Kenneth at the time of the attack—had struck upon the thick back of a heavy hunting watch.

which the youth carried in his breast pocket, and glancing off had passed through his clothes—thus deceiving the wretch into the belief that his knife had penetrated the young man's body, while in reality it did not even mar the skin. Torillo's knife—Viola's uncle stood at the young man's left hand—had passed straight through his vest and shirts, inflicting a wound, though by no means a serious one.

Having satisfied himself of the extent of his injuries, and dressed his wound to the best of his ability, he retired to rest, and finally fell asleep thinking of Viola, and wondering when he should again see her.

CHAPTER XX.

KENNETH'S SPECULATIONS.

THE following morning Kenneth was early astir, and the only inconvenience he experienced from the rencounter of the night previous, was a little stiffness and soreness in his left side and arm.

"What a strange dream!" he murmured, as he turned out of bed. And then for a few moments he remained quite absorbed, as if recalling the vision of his sleep. At length he raised his face from the floor, upon which his eyes had been fixed, and began to speak, as if addressing some one.

"I thought that all above, beneath, around me," he murmured, "was a thick, impenetrable cloud. My brain seemed bewildered, and a feeling of wildness swelled my heart. I turned my gaze every way, but there seemed no method of escape. While yet my straining eyes were fixed upon the walls of my strange prison-house, the clouds began to lift, and beyond I saw Viola, radiant and beautiful as the angel that she is. With her mild, soft eyes, she

gazed upon me, earnestly, and pleadingly. I bounded forward, but ere I had reached her, the form of a huge serpent started up in my path, and a voice of terror hissed in my ear—'beware! beware!' Mingling with the warning arose a piercing scream from the lips of Viola. An indescribable confusion followed, in the midst of which I awoke, glad to find that the horrid fantasy was nothing but a dream."

Still busy thinking of his vision, Kenneth commenced the duties of the toilette. After dressing himself with all his clothing, except his coat and vest, he paused in reflection.

"Under the circumstances," he said, mentally, "it would, probably, be better for me, at least for the present, to appear in a plain suit. This uniform may be a distinguishing mark—by it I may be known; and from recent indications it behooves me to exercise every caution. *Some* of these Jesuitical Romanists, *at least*, have no conscience when dealing with the heretics; and my connection with Viola, together with the freedom of my expressions, have, doubtless, made me hated by a portion of them."

The youth had already commenced changing his clothes; and in a few moments he was habited in a suit of plain black, which fitted admirably to his finely proportioned person. Apparently satisfied with the change, he flung himself into an arm chair, and again was buried in thought. Starting up sud-

denly, after the lapse of a few moments, he began to pace the room backwards and forwards, muttering at the same time,—

"There can be no mistake about it. The whole thing is too plain to be doubted. Her uncle, who I judge to be a hypocritical villain, is at the bottom of it all. The sneaking Sisters discovered our attachment at Norfolk—else why was Viola so suddenly removed from the city?—and put her uncle and his satellites upon my trail. Her uncle, probably, fears that I will marry Viola, and release her and her fortune from his grasp; and makes her apostacy—which the innocent creature has not art enough to conceal—his excuse for whatever course he pursues; if, indeed, which I very much doubt, any excuse be needed. That his object is her estate seems evident to my mind, from his anxiety to induce her to take the black vail; and a weak-minded mother's ignorance and bigotry was the hobby upon which he hoped to ride to success. And it was nearly successful, too. But for my interference—and there, doubtless, is the grudge—Viola would have eventually yielded to a mistaken sense of filial duty. Unquestionably my conduct has been well canvassed—hence is my life assailed. But to a Power mightier than man, or the Holy Church either, I entrust myself. That my enemies are close upon my track, however, is plain enough from the attempt that was made last night. And that those

who waylaid me were familiar with both Viola and myself, and with all the circumstances of our position, is apparent from their language and conduct. The woman knew me, and Viola, too—her words and manner prove that. And one of the men, after I had fallen, mentioned the name of the young girl, and spoke of the Holy Church ; which should be enough to convince any reasonable man of their knowledge and authority. Who either of the three were, however, I could not say. I never saw the woman before, that I know of, and she was so completely muffled up that I hardly think I could recognize her again. Neither do I think I would know the men—except I might recognize them by their voices, which I think barely possible. Now this would be enough to deter some men—but it only makes me more resolute. Every hour but increases my love for Viola—and, thank God! I can lay my hand on my heart and say, it is not her fortune that I covet—and no human power, if *she* continues willing, shall prevent me from possessing her."

Kenneth's meditations were here interrupted by the ringing of the breakfast bell. The youth descended to the dining room, and ate heartily, for, reader, he was a substantial man, and one who put great faith in the power of bone and sinew.

CHAPTER XXI.

DELIVERY OF VIOLA'S LETTER BY THE STRANGE CARRIER.

We will now pass over the following forty-eight hours, during which time nothing of any moment occurred in this vicinity. Kenneth wandered about the city watching everything, and everybody, but irresolute as to his next step. Sometimes he felt inclined to pay another visit to Mt. Carmel; and then his better judgment suggested the impolicy of such a course just then. A hundred plans to discover the retreat of Viola flitted through his mind, and as quickly as they came were discarded as impracticable. And above all loomed the agonizing thought that Viola might be in danger; or, at least, might be compelled into some course which would blast all her future life, and crush all his dearest hopes. That these thoughts kept Kenneth on the rack, is unquestionable.

After breakfast on the second morning following his rencounter in the suburbs, the young man sauntered into the reading-room of the hotel. On his

entrance, a gentleman, who was seated at one of the tables perusing a paper, lifted his eyes, and nodding, passed the compliments of the morning. Kenneth returned the salutation, and then seated himself at another table, apart from the company; and in a few moments was lost in thought.

"Why, that's singular!" suddenly exclaimed the gentleman who had addressed Kenneth on his entrance, and evidently at something which he saw in the paper. Then turning his eyes from the paper to Kenneth, he continued—"Here's something that interests you, Lieut. Egerton. And a very strange thing I must say!" Kenneth looked up inquiringly. "Faith, Lieutenant," continued the gentleman, "your correspondents will have to be looked after, if this is the manner in which they defraud Uncle Sam."

"I cannot comprehend you, sir," replied Kenneth, at the same time moving towards the gentleman who had addressed him. "You spoke of something that interested me. Will you be good enough to explain?"

"*That*, will explain itself!" responded the gentleman, pointing to a paragraph in the paper.

Kenneth followed the direction of the speaker's finger, and with the greatest astonishment read the following "NOTICE—"

"A pigeon belonging to one of our subscribers, was found in its box yesterday, having a letter directed

to 'LIEUT. KENNETH EGERTON,' tied securely around its neck. We must say there is something of an air of mystery about the finding of this letter, which invests it, in our mind, with considerable interest. The whole affair, however, may be nothing more than a piece of sport. As it now stands, it defies all speculation. If, however, there is such a person as Lieut. Kenneth Egerton, and he is in this city, he can have the letter by inquiring at our office."

Kenneth looked completely bewildered.

When the gentleman seemed satisfied that our hero had finished reading the notice, he said,

"Well, what do you think of that, Lieutenant?"

"It is most singular," responded Kenneth. "I cannot imagine the meaning of it. I will call at the office, however, and if this paragraph be other than a hoax, obtain the letter. Good-day, sir."

A half hour after, and Kenneth returned to his room with the letter in his possession. Without removing his hat he threw himself into a chair, and tore open the document. Running his glance down the paper his eye rested on the signature, and he jumped from the chair, exclaiming—"Viola!"

"From Viola!" he continued. "Can it be? Let me see! What does it say? A moment will end all my suspense." Then swallowing down his agitation, he read Viola's letter, which ran thus:—

"Dear Kenneth—for by that title my heart tells me that I must forever, henceforward, call you—I have been in this city some hours, though by the time you get this—if you ever do—I shall, probably, be at my uncle's estate on the banks of the Schuylkill. I am watched, and guarded, as if I were a prisoner guilty of some capital offence. I can now see it plainly, and I am sure some wrong is intended me. An unaccountable feeling of dread has taken possession of my heart, and I should be thankful for an opportunity to escape my uncle's surveillance. On you, Kenneth, I rely; but for my sake be very cautious, and run no needless risk. This is the first opportunity I have had of writing, and you may judge from the appearance of the epistle that I have had little choice of materials. Ink I could not find, and the only alternative that was presented me, was to draw a little blood from one of my fingers. How I shall get this letter to you I know not. I dare not trust those around me, and I am at my wit's end. Perhaps some way may yet turn up. I know that you are in this vicinity, because this morning we passed you on the road between here and Mt. Carmel. I recognized your voice instantly. You inquired of the driver the distance to the Convent. Keep me in your memory, dear Kenneth. And now farewell.

Viola.

Midnight, Sept. 20th, 18—."

"So, ho, the mystery begins to unravel—the clouds begin to dissipate!" murmured Kenneth, after he had twice read the letter through, and indulged in a few lover-like rhapsodies. "Now do I know that there is some plot afoot, in the success of which I am interfering. And these godly priests, and sanctimonious Abbesses, are helping it along." Then fixing his eyes upon the paper which he held in his hand, he said—"The dear girl declares that she trusts in me; and I will endeavor that she shall not be disappointed in her confidence. If mortal man *can* rescue her, I will do so."

Here Kenneth again re-read the letter.

"Under what difficulties must the poor girl have labored," he continued; "and how anxious she must have been to communicate with me, when she could resort to such extreme measures to accomplish her purpose. Her blood!" and Kenneth pressed the soiled sheet to his trembling lips; "O, woman, who can fathom the deeps of thy great heart!" After another thoughtful pause, the young man resumed, his reflections taking a different direction—"It was surely some good angel prompted the dear girl to entrust her letter to such a singular postman. It was a bright idea, and has proven eminently successful. Never bird carried a more precious document than this; and though the poor dumb creature had

no direct agency in its safe delivery, I will have it if money will purchase it."

Again he perused Viola's suggestive billet, and again his thoughts rambled off in another direction.

"So, Viola was not at the Convent when I called there," he continued, "though they led me to think she was. Judging from that, they fancied I would pay them a visit, and concerted a plan to mislead me. But they have failed, thanks to this;" and Kenneth shook the letter triumphantly. "And to think that Viola has been in this city—so near me—and I not know it. Doubtless, too, her uncle was with her; and, most likely, it was he who instigated the attempt upon my life—even if he himself was not personally engaged in it. Well, thank God! there, too, they signally failed. And now, let me consider what is best to be done. In the first place, then, I must depart forthwith to Philadelphia; and as I shall probably have sharp work there, I think I had better provide myself with a body servant before I start. But where shall I get a trusty one? Scipio would be the very person; and if I thought I could obtain him, I should almost be tempted to delay my departure a little to do so. I must have one upon whom I can rely; and where can I find another of whose faithfulness, honesty, and sagacity, I may be so sure as I may of his? It is a strong temptation. Delays are dangerous, I know; and Viola may require imme-

diate assistance ; but still I feel that I had better have another with me ; and who so likely, or ready, to help me, as Scipio ? Yes, I'll wait and write to Robson about him."

In a twinkling, so to speak, Kenneth was scribbling away in a regular locomotive manner. A letter was soon written and directed to Mr. Geo. Robson, who owned the negro Scipio, in which Kenneth stated his urgent wish for a faithful body servant, and offered to purchase the man named at any reasonable price.

On the way to the post office to deposit his letter, he stopped at the newspaper office, and obtained the address of the owner of the pigeon ; and on his return he called upon the man, and made an arrangement with him by which the bird was to be kept until he demanded it.

These things settled, he returned to the hotel, and shut himself up in his own room, there to await, in the best way he could, a reply from Scipio's master.

CHAPTER XXII.

KENNETH PURCHASES THE NEGRO SCIPIO TO AID HIM IN HIS ENTERPRISE.

At a pretty early hour on the following morning—the third day after the departure of Viola from the city—Kenneth's attention was attracted by a low knocking at his room door.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"Only me, Marster Egaton," responded a familiar voice. "I'se cum. Dat's so!"

"Ah, ha, Scipio, is that you? Come in!" said Kenneth, opening the door, and admitting the smiling and scraping negro.

"Ah, Marster Egaton, I'se glad to see you, I is," said Scipio. "Dar's a 'pistle, Marster Robson told me to fotch you."

Kenneth opened the letter and read as follows:—

"Lieut. Kenneth Egerton—

Dear Sir: The nigger's yours; and I am glad I can serve you in so trifling a matter. His

points you know as well as I do. About the terms we shan't quarrel; but as you're in such a devil of a hurry, we'll leave the settlement until some other time. Here's to your health, boy; and when you stand in need of a friend come to me. We're all well here—white folks and niggers—old folks and babbies. We've been away, you know; but Yellow Jack behaves so gentlemanly, we thought we'd venture back again. No more. Yours, etc.,

GEO. ROBSON."

"Characteristic!" murmured Kenneth, with a smile. Then turning to the negro, he inquired of him—"Do you know why you have been sent here, Scipio?"

"Not 'xactly, Marster Egaton. Marster Robson tole me to fotch dat 'pistle to you, an' to hurry up my cakes or I'd git Jessy. Dat's all!"

"Well, Scipio, how would you like to take me for a master?"

"De high golly, Marster Egaton, I should like him great!" rejoined the negro, his huge, expressive eyes sparkling with pleasure.

"Well, then, Scipio, henceforth you are my property. Your late master has sold you to me."

"Am dat a fac', Marster Egaton?" cried the negro, ready to dance with joy; not that his previous master was an unusually cruel man, but that he felt deeply attached to Kenneth, for the kindly manner in

which he had always treated him, when chance had thrown them together.

"It is just as I tell you, Scipio. And now, I want you to be good, and faithful to me, and we shall never part until death separates us."

"Dat I will, Marster Egaton, dat I will!" responded the negro, earnestly. "Only jest you try dis niggar. Golly, I'll do anyting at all for you. Dat's so!"

"I believe you, Scipio."

"Tank you, Marster Egaton."

"Now I want you to listen to me attentively. I am at present engaged in an enterprise which demands both caution and secrecy; therefore, if you are asked any questions concerning me—even should it only be as to my whereabouts—you must know nothing. Do you comprehend me, Scipio?"

"I'm dar, Marster!" responded the negro, pursing up his mouth, and laying the forefinger of his left hand against the side of his nose. "My ig'nance shall be 'stonishin'."

"The enterprise that I speak of, Scipio, is this," continued Kenneth. "But, first, you remember Sister Ursula, I suppose?"

"Does'nt I, Marster Egaton?" ejaculated the negro enthusiastically. "She were a bressed angel, dat Sister Usuler."

"Well, then, Sister Ursula is very rich, and her

parents being dead, she is in the charge of an uncle of hers, who, I take it, is a very bad man; and who has been endeavoring to induce her to take the black vail; so that he, as I think, might rob her of her fortune."

"De funnel willin!" cried Scipio, energetically.

The negro had also taken a great liking to Viola, little as he had seen of her, and was no more likely to show her enemies any mercy than was Kenneth.

"Failing in that," continued Kenneth, "he has now conveyed her to his family mansion near Philadelphia. I have received a letter from the young lady—how! it matters not—stating whither she was being taken—the personal fear in which she stood—and calling upon me to help her, if possible. It is to liberate her that I am now pledged. And in this business I thought that I should probably need a willing and faithful attendant; therefore I wrote your master that I should like to buy you, and he has consented, as I have said, to part with you."

"Well, Marster Egaton, jest you tole me what for to do, dat's all. I'll do anyting at tall to help you an' Sister Usuler. Dat's so!"

"In an hour or two we shall start to Philadelphia," continued Kenneth, "and as soon as we reach there, I shall legally free you."

"Fee me, Marster Egaton!" cried the negro, perfectly amazed. "What fo'?"

"Why, shouldn't you like to be a free man?" demanded Kenneth.

"Yes, I'd like well enuff to be fee, Marster Egaton, but I dun want to leab you, no how!"

"Well, it don't follow, because I free you, that you must leave me, Scipio."

"Am dat so?" inquired the negro, brightening up.

"Just as I tell you," replied Kenneth. "I neither expect, nor do I wish, you to leave me. I want your services; but whatever you do for me, must be done voluntarily—not by compulsion. I exact nothing. I have bought you, it is true; but only with the design of at once giving you your liberty. No human being shall be a slave of mine, no matter how great a need I may have of their services. If then, you choose to leave me, nothing can, and I *would not*, prevent you from doing so."

"If I ebber do leab you, Marster Egaton, may I be ——"

But Kenneth interrupted the negro's earnest expression of feeling, by saying—

"Well, never mind, Scipio, I'll trust you. But now we must think of something else. You must also remember that Sister Ursula's enemies have likewise become mine!"

"I 'stands it, Marster Egaton, I 'stands it," rejoined the negro, with a knowing look. "Dun you fear 'bout me 'memb'ring it!"

"I don't fear, Scipio. And now but follow my directions, and you will not go astray. We are matched against powerful, cunning men, and it will require unusual care and circumspection upon our part. One hasty, ill-advised step, may precipitate all—ruin our prospects, and endanger our lives. Besides, we must think of Sister Ursula, and be threefold cautious."

"Dat we will, Marster Egaton!"

"That you may fully understand my position, Scipio, let me tell you that only a few nights ago I was enticed into the suburbs of this city, where an attempt was made to assassinate me. In fact the villains left with the impression that they had taken my life. This shows that they are not to be trifled with."

"'Tempted to 'sassinate *you*, Marster Egaton!" cried the negro, as if the thought were too monstrous for belief. "De vagabones! I wish I had been dar!"

"If you had have been there, Scipio, it is most likely they would not have undertaken it. But, now, prepare for our journey. Pack up my trunks as fast as you can. I am going out for a few moments. As soon as I return we shall take our departure."

"Yes, Marster Egaton, I'll do jest what you tole me."

The next moment the negro was buried deep in a

wardrobe. As Kenneth disappeared from the room, he thrust out his great woolly head, and grinning all over his face, he exclaimed—

"De high golly, I'se a lucky chile, I is!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

VIOLA AT THE OLD MANSION HOUSE.

VIOLA'S first night at the old mansion house was an eventful one.

Upon her arrival, which—in consequence of a detention on the way—was late in the afternoon of the next day, she was conducted to the same apartment which she had occupied three years previously, and of which she still retained a very vivid recollection. But her feelings on returning to it were far different from what they were when she left it; and to the young girl the contrast was exceedingly painful.

We shall not attempt to portray the various emotions, which, minute by minute, agitated the bosom of our heroine. The circumstances of her situation will suggest them to the mind of the reader. That she dwelt long and lingeringly on the thought of Kenneth—that she wondered where he was, and whether he would ever receive her letter—and again, whether their two destinies would every become one

and inseparable, was but natural. And that from these topics her mind reverted to her own situation—so evidently a prisoner—so certainly a victim to some hidden plot which she could but feel and not fathom —is not to be wondered at.

Her apartment was in the third story of the old mansion, and the window overlooked the Schuylkill. There she seated herself—as she had done a thousand times before, though with different feelings—and gazed down upon the still, silver looking waters of the Schuylkill. Night drew on—her tea and toast were brought to her room—and still she sat there gazing out upon the quiet waters of the river, and thinking.

The view all around was picturesque and beautiful; but she saw it not—heeded it not; and to our mind it would have been a greater wonder if she had. All about the old house was the dense forest of luxuriant trees, the thick foliage forming an impenetrable breastwork. In the clearing between the house and the forest were graveled walks, and grassy plots, and shrubs, and plants, and flowers.

From the side of the house upon which the window of Viola's apartment looked, as we have previously stated, the descent to the river's brink—after a few yards of level ground—was by a steep hill. From the elevation of Viola's window, the young girl could only see the river over the tops of the trees, the

highest of which were, of course, at the summit of the hill on the edge of the level ground. The space underneath the foliage of the trees, her gaze could only penetrate for a few feet, the descent of the hill bringing the trees lower and lower, thus forming an impenetrable barrier. A person standing on the edge of the level ground at the top of the hill, could not see directly from them, but by looking down they would get a tolerable view of the river flowing at the bottom; though, even then, the trunks of the trees somewhat obscured the prospect.

Looking out upon this scene, though seeing little of it, we will leave Viola for the present.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RUPTURE BETWEEN VIOLA AND HER UNCLE.—THE JESUIT ANNOUNCES TO HIS NIECE THE DEATH OF KENNETH. —THE YOUNG GIRL'S GRIEF.

In the library, which, it will be borne in mind, was in the west wing of the building, looking inland, was Viola's uncle, his mind busy with regrets for the unsuccessful past, and new schemes for the future. At times he would walk the floor impatiently, muttering to himself, and striking his hard wrinkled hands together; and then again he would cast himself upon a lounge, and burying his hard face in his palms, for a long time remain absorbed. His mind was violently and deeply exercised. At length he talked aloud, and as his thoughts assumed a shape, his heavy eye-brows lowered darkly and terribly. The demon of bad thoughts was busy in his heart.

"It shall be done!" he muttered, at length, with savage determination. "Her heretic lover is now out of the way, and she is safe here. And unless I want more champions to rise up I will profit by the

occasion. By the Virgin Mother, I will dally no longer. She shall die! To let her live with the chance of escape is to hold myself in constant dread, or to be necessitated to flee the country. She shall die! Her apostacy to the Church—and I can easily make clear the charge—will satisfy all inquiry in that quarter, if any is needed; and for the rest I must run the risk; which, however, I don't think very great. Yes, she shall die! Fool that I was not to have taken this step in the first place—then had I saved myself much trouble, loss of time and anxiety. But she is my sister's child, and hitherto that thought has somewhat restrained me. But even that is over now, and I could *kill* her without a single regret. Self-interest outweighs all other considerations."

Seizing a small bell, that was on a table near by, he rang violently.

The summons was answered by a dark, hard-featured man, well advanced in years. This was Torillo's confidential secretary, valet, etc. He was an outlawed Frenchman, and he went by the name of Marco, and no other.

"Where is my son?" demanded Torillo, savagely.

"Gone to the city," responded Marco. Brevity was his peculiar characteristic, and among the first of his recommendations.

"How long has he been gone?"

"Since early this morning."

"Drinking and gambling, as usual, I suppose," muttered Torillo. Then to Marco he continued,—

"Did he say when he should return?"

"No!"

"When he comes back see that he is sent to this room."

"Yes."

"Now summon all the household here immediately. I have something to communicate."

Marco cast one quick glance at his master's face, and then wheeling round, quitted the apartment. In a few moments he returned, followed by the rest of the domestics, of which there were, besides himself, two other men, and two women, all, as if especially selected for some purpose, of an unprepossessing and disagreeable appearance.

For a moment Torillo flashed a dark, searching glance around upon his assembled household; and then, in low, deep, stern tones, he addressed them,—

"You have been with me, all of you, many years, and I have always found you faithful to my interests. My will you have ever been satisfied to execute without prying into my secrets. That has been, and is, all I ask. Let your conduct in the future be of a similar character. I have that to do which concerns not any of you, further than to execute my orders. Disobey me, or meddle in my concerns, and you were better never to have seen me. As an agent of

the Holy Church—of which you are all of you, I hope and believe, faithful servants—I have that to do which demands secrecy. A heretic has crossed my path, and seduced from her duty one reared in the bosom of the Church. *He* has suffered; but she has yet her crime to expiate. Further than that it is not necessary to inform you. You may have your thoughts, but beware how you let them leak out—beware how even the face betrays the workings of the mind. And next to secrecy is obedience—both cardinal virtues. And now, let my niece's return home be a strict secret confined to this house. See, too, that she does not leave the house or communicate with any one outside. And while you are watchful outside, whatever you hear or see within doors take no note of. Now go! Elise!" he continued, addressing one of the women, "summon my niece to this apartment."

With a wave of the hand Torillo then cleared the apartment.

"Caution! caution! caution!" he muttered, immediately he was alone. "'Tis the palladium of a man's safety—the key of success. Caution, I say again; for though Viola's heretic lover is dead, she may have communicated, for what I know, with others equally dangerous; or may yet—though I hardly think it possible—find a way to do so. Women, however, are artful and ingenious."

There was a preparatory knock, and then the door of the apartment swung open, and with a reluctant step Viola entered the room, the woman Elise closing the door, and remaining outside.

For a moment the two regarded each other; and then Torillo addressed his niece in tones which he vainly endeavored to modify.

"Viola," he said, "it is useless to conceal from you the fact that I am in possession of all your secrets."

The young girl made no answer, but stood gazing fixedly at her uncle—not with a bold assurance, but with a desperate resolution.

"In compliance with your dead mother's last wish," he continued, "I confided you to the care of those who were instructed to prepare your mind for that life which it was her desire that you should lead. From the very first you were rebellious and obstinate. Unfortunately you were permitted to leave the Convent. While away you made the acquaintance of a heretic!" and Torillo was fast working himself into a passion—"who was not slow in winning your *too willing* mind from every sense of duty. In that hour you would have deserted friends, relatives, and religion. But eyes were on you of which you dreamed not. What followed you know, for you are not a fool."

"Uncle!" cried Viola with passionate earnestness

—"why persecute me so? why seek to compel me into a course at which all my soul revolts?"

"Because it is my *duty*, girl!" responded her uncle, striking his hands together to give his words greater force. "Because I owe it to your mother!—because I owe it to the Church!—because——"

I want you out of the way, he was going to add; but thinking better of the words he finished the sentence by saying—

"Because it is for the best."

"Your duty, uncle, is to consider my happiness; and the Church has no right to interfere in my choice of a life," rejoined Viola, giving way to her excited feelings, and rising superior to her usual timidity. "And for the fulfillment, or non-fulfillment of my mother's wish, I alone am answerable."

"True, girl, true!" hissed Torillo. "By the mass, there's no one wishes to relieve you of the weight of your responsibility."

"I will bear it all, uncle," cried Viola, excitedly; "only give me liberty!—set me free!"

"Free! What for?" shouted her uncle, passionately. "That you might marry the accursed heretic?"

"And if I love him, uncle, why not?" demanded Viola, courageously. "Is *he* any the less a man because his religion differs from your's? Or am *I* a

slave that all my thoughts, feelings, and affections, must be derived from others?"

"Aye, *my* slave, apostate girl!" yelled Torillo, madly; in his passion throwing off all disguise. "*My* slave! to do as *I* will, let that be what it may. And for your heretic lover, unless the grave can give back its dead, his wife you can never be!"

"Dead! Kenneth dead!" cried Viola, in agonizing tones. "O, can this be?"

"Aye, dead, girl, dead!" and Torillo was now white with passion. "By this hand he fell! The poor fool, when he thought to meet *you*, met only death! Did you think to play with me?"

Viola heard no more. Speak again she could not. Pressing her hands upon her heart, she gasped hysterically, and sank, a dead weight, to the floor.

"Let her die!" hissed Torillo, between his set teeth. "It will save me the trouble of killing her."

After several times striding up and down the apartment, he again seized the bell, and rang it violently. In an instant Marco appeared in the doorway, and Torillo pointing to his niece, said—

"Carry her to her room, and leave her there."

Again was Viola's uncle alone; and in darkness too, for night had now settled upon the earth. And still he strode up and down the apartment, muttering his thoughts in unintelligible tones. Finally, he

paused, and again rang the bell. Marco appeared at the door.

"Lights!" he uttered.

Marco disappeared quickly, and in a few moments returned with lamps.

"Has my soon returned yet?" demanded Torillo.

"No!"

At that moment the door-bell rang violently.

"That must be he," said Marco, while yet the bell was ringing. "A stranger could not approach so near the house, especially after dark."

"See!" muttered Torillo, beginning again to track up and down the room.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE JESUIT AND HIS SON.—THE CONSULTATION.—THE PLOT TO GET RID OF VIOLA AND SECURE HER FORTUNE.—FATHER AND SON SECRETLY ARRAYED AGAINST EACH OTHER.—VIOLA STILL TO BE THE SUFFERER WHICH EVER TRIUMPHS.

MARCO glided from the apartment, and a few moments later the door was reöpened, and Ferdinand Torillo sauntered into the presence of his father.

"Marco has told me that you wished to see me immediately; and, though I am completely fagged out, like a dutiful child, I obey your bidding at once," he said, in a careless, off-hand manner. "Now, speak, father; is it any thing urgent?"

"I think so," rejoined Torillo crisply. "But you shall judge for yourself. Listen!"

"Proceed, father," responded Ferdinand, stretching his limbs, and yawning deeply.

Torillo then seated himself in the opposite corner of the lounge upon which his son was reclining, and without further preface entered into a full description of every event that had any connection with

Viola or the designs which he had upon her person or her property. With a portion of this, however, Ferdinand was perfectly familiar. He knew that his father had spent large sums of money belonging to his cousin—for he had assisted him in doing so—and he knew, too, that the old man had designs upon the whole of it. And equally familiar was he with the attempt that had been made to induce Viola to take the vail. Further than that, however, he knew but little, until his father enlightened him on this occasion. And while he had been listening, he too had been scheming. His plot will soon appear.

"In this case, father, your success is not much of a compliment to your skill," he remarked, when his father's manner indicated that he had finished. Then, seeing that his words were distasteful to his parent, and, thinking it politic to remove, just then, any bad impression—otherwise he would have defied his father—he continued,—"But, doubtless, you did all that man could do."

"Aye, that did I! But there were events over which I had no control," rejoined Torillo, bitterly.

"Just so," responded Ferdinand, with a very dutiful intonation. "But you put the heretic lover beyond the power of ever troubling you again!"

"That I did!" cried Torillo, exultingly. "'Twas a quick blow but a sure one!"

"He was dangerous to you and your plans father,

and it is well he is silenced. It is one the less to contend with. With youth and bravery in his favor—and love to spur him onward—he might have come off too good for your safety."

"But he is past meddling, now!"

"Unquestionably, father. But what do you intend doing next?"

"There is but one way left to rid ourselves—for I take it that you are as much interested in this matter as I am myself—of the girl, and to secure her money," rejoined Torillo, with all the malevolence of a fiend.

"And that is?"

"By killing her!"

"True," responded Ferdinand, thoughtfully. "But, *how* shall it be done? and, *can* it be done without detection? Viola may have communicated with others—you know not to the contrary—besides this one; and should they become anxious about her—or any thing of a suspicious character occur—an explosion might follow, and we be buried beneath the ruins. For, let the populace once become excited against us, and neither our property nor our lives would be safe. And every day the feeling grows stronger, and deeper against the Holy Church, and her servants. I can hear it—see it—feel it; yes, *feel* it!" he repeated, bitterly. "Papist, is becoming a word of fear and suspicion. And men begin to speak and writing against the power of the Church, as a fast

increasing evil, subversive of all morality, republicanism, and law."

"Aye, Ferdinand ; but so long as the Church continues true to herself—so long as we are *combined*—that is the talismanic word—the accursed Protestants can make but little head against us."

"That is true, father ; but while the Church continues invulnerable, we, individually, have a much greater cause to fear their daily increasing watchfulness. I but mean by this that it is better to be cautious and triumph, than to be too bold and fail."

"You are right, Ferdinand ; but so do I hate the Protestants, as a body, that I have little patience with any of them, individually. But I think you may be correct about Viola's having, probably, communicated with others besides her lover. I have thought so before ; and I have endeavored to weigh every chance, pro and con. I am not given to rashness, you know. Still, I cannot see how secrecy, and an ordinary degree of cunning, may not render us safe against every contingency. It is seldom that the Church or the Society fails, together or singly, in promoting the general success of the body, or the individual designs of the members. We are a brotherhood whose secrecy is impenetrable—whose power is quick and far-reaching—and whose laws are implacable. Pish ! 'tis idle to question our power, and *you* never did it before. All at once you seem to

have grown chicken-hearted, or something else. I can't exactly understand it. You did not talk in this way when you gave Marie Sempler—having wearied of her love—the fatal drink that forever stilled *her* upbraiding tongue."

Darkly lowered Ferdinand's brow; and in that moment he looked the image of his wicked father. Setting his teeth tightly together, he muttered, slowly,—

"'Twas her life or mine. I had smothered her babe, and in a moment of angry disappointment, she threatened me."

"I am not speaking of the circumstances, Ferdinand; I only say that you were not then as fearful as you seem now."

"I am not *fearful*, father! I am only prudent. Times have changed since Marie met her fate. We are not now so secure as we were then. Suspicion has lighted upon Papists generally, and our word is not now as potential as it was formerly. Times, I say, have changed; and it behooves us to be a great deal more wary."

"I know all that; but there are vaults beneath this old house," continued Torillo, drawing closer to his son, and speaking in a whisper, "deep and dark; from which no cry could reach the air, and of whose existence only you and me are aware. Our forefathers made their homes prison-houses; and, regard-

less of the laws, themselves judges. Many's the one, doubtless, whose bones are now bleaching in the dungeons beneath us. Why not let her's bleach there with them? Who but ourselves would be the wiser? Short allowance, or none at all, would soon end her career, and put us in possession of her wealth. Why should we hesitate? Besides that we want the whole of her money—is not the girl an apostate to her religion, and a traitor to her family and friends?"

"All that I admit," was Ferdinand's answer. "With us, especially as things are, the necessity is indisputable. I only recommend extreme prudence; for if, by chance, Viola has communicated with any others of the heretics—and it is said, 'where there's a will'—and you yourself admit Viola's apostacy—'there's always a way'—she may be missed and inquired after; and, in that case, neither the power of the Church, nor any cunning influence of ours, could prevent the house from being thoroughly searched. And hundreds, doubtless, would be delighted with the opportunity."

"But they could never discover the vaults!" rejoined Torillo, impatient at being opposed.

"They might. Stranger things than that have happened. Besides, the cry of, 'They are Papists!' would render still more keen their naturally quick perceptions. As a body, we have earned a notoriety

for all that is terrible and wicked. The vaults have had their day; to use them now, or, at least, in this case, would be a risk."

"Then we can kill her in her sleep, or poison her food, and bury the body down on the shore."

"The same objection presents itself, father. If any suspicion were aroused, the body might be disinterred; and an examination would disclose all, and ruin us."

"What in the fiend's name would you do, then?" shouted Torillo, losing all control of himself. It's you would, and you wouldn't! I can't understand what you are aiming at, and I almost doubt whether you know yourself. What *would* you do?"

"I'll tell you, father," was Ferdinand's quiet and thoughtful reply—quiet and thoughtful, because there was deceit at the bottom of it—quiet and thoughtful, because he wished to mollify, not irritate, his parent—because he had a something he desired to accomplish. "Listen! A far better plan than either of those you have suggested has come into my mind since we have been talking. You will see at once that it is much safer, and at the same time equally as sure. I only wonder that you yourself did not think of something like it."

"What is it?" demanded Torillo, sharply and impatiently.

"Simply this, father," responded the young man,

not without some hesitation; for he had considerable doubt as to his capacity for blinding his intriguing parent,—the latter was so familiar with all sorts of plots and counterplots,—"simply this. Let me marry Viola, and on the plea of a marriage tour, convey her far away out of the country."

Torillo smiled and frowned at the same moment. The proposition seemed to simultaneously strike him in a different manner.

"If not on the passage," continued Ferdinand, who had been watching his father's face, but without being able to fathom his feelings, "if not on the passage—and there is every *chance*—don't you see?—that she might fall overboard, or meet with some other mishap—across the ocean. I can, at least, rid myself of her, and without the possibility of any disagreeable inquiries, such as *might* be instituted here. The estate would then be legally ours, and without any uncomfortable prospects ahead. In a proper time I could return home, with some well-turned story, if it were needful, to account for my wife's disappearance. Here, you know, there would be no one to contradict it. Of course I should expect an equal distribution of Viola's fortune."

"Of course," responded Torillo, absently, as if his mind were busy with something else.

Then followed several moments of unbroken silence.

"Well, father, what think you?" demanded Ferdinand, at length.

"But Viola would never consent to marry you," remarked Torillo, still deep in meditation. "The plan is good enough, if she would only consent to become your wife."

"We need not ask it!"

"True; very true," rejoined the old man, slowly.

"Well, shall it be so?" Ferdinand inquired; and any other than a really careless or indifferent observer would have noticed the anxious eagerness of his manner. That it passed not by his father unobserved, admits of no doubt.

After a pause of several moments, Torillo replied—

"Yes, let it be so. Any way to get rid of her.

Now these two men—father and son, too—with the same object in view, were playing directly against each other. Viola was to be the sufferer, however, let which would in the end prove successful.

"To-night I am weary, and would go to bed," continued Ferdinand, scarcely able to conceal his satisfaction. "Besides, I want time to arrange my thoughts. To-morrow I will see Viola, and, perhaps, I can either coax her, or frighten her, into marrying me, and by that means avoid the trouble of forcing her. I can but try, you know. And as you have partially let her into your designs, I may, at least,

effect something by the terror of your purposes, if I cannot by any soft words of my own."

Take your own course. You cannot do much harm, if you do no good. One thing, however, I want to urge upon you—haste! The moments must not be wasted. What is done must be done at once."

"Be satisfied, father, that I will lose no more time than is really necessary," uttered the young man, lightly, as he swung open the door and disappeared from the apartment.

He fancied himself on the high road to fortune.

For a few moments, Torillo continued deeply absorbed in thought; but, at length, he muttered—

"Let him take the job off my hands! So much the better. When it is done I will have the money or *his* life. If he rebels, I will send him to the gallows; or, better still, to keep his mother company. The fool! he cannot cheat me! I am too old and deep to be cozened by a scheme like that."

He, too, was secure in a certainty of success.

As Ferdinand closed the door of his own apartment behind him, he vented a low, gratified laugh.

"How well I misled the old man, keen, cunning, sagacious as he imagines himself," he murmured, with another chuckle. "Let me but once wive Viola, and her princely fortune is mine; and neither my father nor any one else can, or shall, deprive me

of it. But I must be cautious until the girl is securely mine. I must seem to have only father's interest at heart; and now that my chief point is attained, I must pliantly submit to all his behests until after the accomplishment of my object. I am tired of being dependent upon my father—sick of having to beg for every dollar I get; and, now that a chance has presented, by my soul! I will make a bold push for myself. Viola's fortune will set me up; and, come to think of it, I don't believe I should hesitate at a *double* murder—if it became necessary—to obtain it. So, let the old man look to himself if he attempts to thwart me. The temptation would be great."

With these characteristic reflections, Ferdinand composed himself to sleep; but it was a long time before slumber bound his eye-lids. His mind was too busy to rest easily. And Torillo, too, had sought his pillow, but, like his son, he also lay awake revolving in his mind scheme after scheme, plot upon plot.

And Viola, likewise, had long before retired to rest, sick in mind and body. And as she restlessly turned upon her pillow, the agony of *her* thoughts may easily be inferred from her desperate condition. To her frenzied mind—situated as she was—there appeared no loop-hole for escape; and her destiny, dark, terrible, and fatal, seemed as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

CHAPTER XXVI.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE TWO COUSINS, FERDINAND AND VIOLA. —THE PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.—ITS REJECTION.

THE incidents related in the previous chapter, it will be remembered, occurred on the evening of Viola's first arrival at the old mansion. The day following, the young girl was too indisposed even to leave her bed; which, for the time being, put an end to all further persecutions. Torillo and his son chafed at the delay, but, from some inexplicable cause, submitted to it. Neither, however, for a single moment, quitted the house or grounds.

Towerds evening of the second day following, however—and the reader will bear in mind that it was on the morning of the previous day that Kenneth Egerton was making preparations to quit Baltimore—the young girl felt somewhat better; and, having arisen and dressed herself, she opened the window, and seated herself at it. The fresh, cool air, played delightfully upon her burning brow, but brought no relief to the agony of her mental sufferings.

Her convalescence, if we may so term it, was, of course, speedily communicated to her uncle. In fact, that it should be so, was his express orders.

Father and son were closeted in the library, discussing the minutiæ of their mendacious designs, and artfully endeavoring to mislead each other, when a light tap upon the door arrested their attention.

"Come in!" said Torillo.

The woman, Elise, then opened the door, and advanced a few feet within the apartment.

"Well?" continued Torillo, inquiringly.

"Miss Viola has arisen and dressed herself," said Elise. "She is now sitting by the window."

"Then has the time for action come," said Torillo, addressing his son. "We must trifle no longer."

"No!" whispered back Ferdinand. "But first I will seek the interview with Viola that I spoke of."

"As you please; though I do not believe that you will effect anything by persuasion. In the mean time I will send for Father Renouf. We shall need his services."

"Unquestionably!" rejoined Ferdinand, "for what persuasion will not effect, force must. You are agreed to that?"

Torillo nodded his head affirmatively.

Then turning to Elise, the young man continued—

"Summon Viola to attend in the parlor, immediately, and without saying by whose orders."

The woman—not receiving any contradictory orders from Torillo—disappeared to execute her mission.

Turning to his father the youth again continued—

"Notwithstanding your presentiments, father, I hope to come off successful with Viola; and, I scarcely think that I am too sanguine either."

And he did hope so; but principally because he foresaw much trouble with the young girl should it be otherwise.

"We shall see," was his father's muttered reply.

As Ferdinand disappeared through the door, Torillo rang the little bell, and in a moment after Marco made his appearance in the apartment.

"Marco," said Torillo, "hasten to the city, and summon hither Father Renouf. I wish to see him immediately."

"He has but just this moment been admitted."

"Indeed! His arrival is most opportune. Send him here."

Marco turned and left the apartment.

* * * * * *

Viola received Elise's communication with painful emotion. But what could she do in such a den of hungry, blood-thirsty wolves? To disobey were useless; and the poor girl fully realized her apparently hopeless and unprotected position. Kenneth dead, and her uncle arrayed against her, what could she expect? White as a marble statue, and with a heart

aching from days of grief, and nights of sleepless agony, she sought the parlor, not to encounter the frowning brow of her uncle, as she anticipated, but to meet the passionate glance of her dissipated and equally dangerous cousin.

"Cousin Viola, I am glad to see you!" said Ferdinand, kindly, at the same time taking her passive hands in his own. "It is three years, now, since last we met, and you were then, comparatively, a child."

"Yes," rejoined Viola, coldly, hoping nothing from her cousin's kind manner.

"Why so cold and distant, cousin?" continued Ferdinand, with that same soft, wheedling voice that his father knew so well how, upon occasions, to assume. "I have never injured you; I have never been unkind to you. Besides, I have come now to save you—for that you are in danger you must know—if you will but let me."

"Save me!" cried Viola, quickly, in that one thought forgetting every thing else. "Save me!" and she eagerly bent forward. "How?"

"Listen to me patiently, Viola, and I will tell you. But you must promise me not to act hastily, for the subject is an exciting one."

"Go on!" said Viola, in a low, deep whisper of intense expectation.

"But first hear what my father has done—and I assure you I know every thing—and what he proposes

to do," continued Ferdinand, seriously. "Will you sit down?" he inquired, after a pause, at the same time very politely handing the young girl a chair.

Viola silently sank into it.

Deliberately Ferdinand then related to his cousin —and the young girl never spoke a word or moved a muscle during the whole recital—every circumstance of his father's purposes and plans. And he did not spare the old man, either; on the contrary he painted him in the worst possible colors, dwelling with minute precision upon all the bad points of his disposition and character. It was a revelation to have appalled the stoutest—but Viola heard it with apparent indifference. Not so in reality was it, however. Every word seemed to sever, so to speak, one of her few remaining life cords.

Not even when he informed her of the plot to induce her to take the vail—of the falsehood of what she believed to have been her dying mother's request —or, of the forged letter, did she stir or speak. Part of this she already suspected, but the whole truth came upon her with astounding effect. For awhile she could not realize all she had heard. It was several minutes after the echo of Ferdinand's voice died away, when she slowly arose to her feet and confronted her cousin, who had arisen at the same time. And as she did so, a pale, wan smile crept over her

white features. In that moment she looked too etherial for earth.

"Let me understand you fully, cousin Ferdinand," she uttered, slowly. "You say that my mother did *not* prefer a wish that I should consecrate myself to the service of the Church—that it was all a cheat, a deception! Is that so?"

"It is, Viola."

"Thank God! thank God!" cried the young girl, fervidly.

"But, Viola, you do not seem to realize to what a length my father is capable of going!" said Ferdinand, disappointed and incensed at the little impression which the most important part of his communication—to his thinking—seemed to have made.

"Fully!" rejoined Viola, with intense earnestness. "Fully!"

"Fully!" echoed Ferdinand. "Are you *sure* of that?"

"I am, cousin, I am!"

"And what then can you expect?" demanded Ferdinand, with startling vehemence.

"What can I expect?" repeated Viola, with a painful start.

"Aye, what, cousin Viola? What can you expect from the liar, the cheat, the assassin? What fate can you look for from the *murderer of Kenneth Egerton*?"

Viola's lips parted in a low and agonizing scream; and she sank down upon the floor on both knees, burying her face in her hands.

"Viola, there is but one way to escape certain death!" continued Ferdinand, bending over the girl. "My father is exasperated, and as surely as he has said it, so surely will he take your life. And from here no cry can be heard, nor can any assistance reach you. The hope of help is madness. You might be murdered, and not one person be the wiser. Think of it, Viola!"

The young girl was silent, her sobs alone indicating her existence.

"And yet there is one door of escape still open to you," continued Ferdinand, earnestly; hoping that he had now so wrought upon the girl's fears as to induce her to accept his terms. "By becoming my wife every door of this house will open, and you may pass forth unmolested. Then, in some other land, you may pass, with me, a long and happy life."

Had the fang of an adder penetrated Viola's bosom, she would not have started to her feet with a wilder look. Her large eyes dilated, her nostrils contracted, and her bosom heaved with the deepest emotion.

"Marry you!" she cried, in tones of mingled indignation and horror; and as she spoke she started to her feet.

"And why not, Viola?" demanded Ferdinand, his

anger deeply stirred by the intensely indignant tones of the young girl. "Why not? Am I a monster, that the thing seems so horrible? Is death—for think not otherwise to escape—preferable to my embrace? Can I not love you, and be kind to you, as well as another?"

"Marry you!" reiterated Viola, as if the words still filled her mind, to the exclusion of everything else.

"Yes, Viola; or else you may do that which is much worse."

"Never!" responded the young girl, with the deepest determination. "I had rather die!—rather suffer ten thousand deaths than consign myself to such a loathsome destiny!"

"You are mad, Viola, mad!" cried Ferdinand, passionately, enraged at the young girl's words. "Refuse this only chance, and your life—do you understand me, girl?—your life will surely be the forfeit. Think again, Viola! think again before it is too late!"

"There needs no reflection," rejoined Viola, firmly. "That could never have been—can never, now. Come death, with all its greatest horrors, before such a fate!"

"Then if you will not be persuaded, Viola"—and Ferdinand hissed the words in the girl's shrinking ear—"force shall compel you. Escape that, obstinate girl, if you can!"

At that instant a violent ringing of the door-bell instantaneously arrested the attention of both.

"Who can it be?" muttered Ferdinand, in a low, half fearful whisper; and at the same time he turned from his cousin, and listened in the direction of the sound.

"Heaven send me help!" murmured Viola, gliding quietly and quickly from the apartment, by another door in the rear of Ferdinand.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE JESUIT AND FATHER RENOUF.—THE DECOY LETTER.—THE JESUIT TRAPPED.

MEANWHILE the elder Torillo had been closeted in the library with Father Renouf. The latter was a dissipated, sensual man, unscrupulous and dangerous. A bloat and a libertine, there was little he would not stoop to, to gratify his appetites. That these two had many dark deeds in common, was but natural.

After the usual greetings, the priest remarked—

"And so you've brought the girl home again!"

"Yes!" responded Torillo, sullenly and bitterly.

"Convent life didn't take her fancy much, it seems!" continued the priest, with a coarse laugh.

"No, not from the first!" replied Torillo, with an oath. "Still, I think the forged letter would have accomplished the work, but for a miserably thoughtless mistake."

"How was that?"

"My directions were somewhat misunderstood, it appears; and, last summer, Viola—who was then at

Mt. Carmel, as you know—was permitted to leave the Convent with the Sisters of Mercy, to attend the hospitals in the south. One of her patients was a fine-looking, smooth-tongued heretic youth, an officer in the navy. The result of it all was, that they fell in love with each other; and the young man, as I have been informed, had almost persuaded Viola to renounce her religion and fly with him, when the Sisters discovered what was going on, and, alarmed for the consequences, speedily returned her to the Convent. As soon as the news reached me I started after her, fully persuaded to forego any further attempt to induce her to take the vail. On our way I stopped one night in Baltimore, whither, as I learned, the youth had followed us; though in what manner he discovered my movements, I cannot guess."

Torillo made a slight pause.

"Well, what did you then?"

"At night we lured him into the suburbs of the city, and with a quick blow sent the unshriven heretic into the next world!" responded Torillo, with triumphant vindictiveness.

"By the Virgin! an expeditious way of settling matters," chuckled the priest. "He is not likely, then, to trouble you again. But what do you now intend to do with your niece? as I don't suppose

that you have given up your intentions in regard to her money."

"For her, death, too; unless she accepts of the chance which I shall offer her through Ferdinand."

"Chance!" rejoined the priest, opening his eyes with astonishment. "Does she know anything of what has occurred in regard to herself or her lover?"

"She knows everything," rejoined Torillo, coolly, and much to the amazement of the priest.

"Everything! Would you then give her a chance to escape, and bring you to justice?"

"I didn't say so," was Torillo's reply; and a diabolical look overspread his sinister countenance. "The chance I offer her is to die here, or somewhere else."

"Ah! I see!" rejoined the priest, with a knowing nod.

"Die, however, she must, and for three good reasons," continued Torillo, sternly. "They are these: In the first place, the Society and myself must share her estate; in the next, she now knows too much to be at large; and in the last place, she has turned her back upon the Holy Church."

"Destruction in every form is a righteous judgment upon the apostate and the heretic," rejoined the impious and hypocritical priest. "But what do you now propose?"

"I did propose to make very short work of the whole affair, but Ferdinand raised so many *prudent* objections that I finally consented to his proposal, which, however, suits me quite as well."

"He is not usually very scrupulous," remarked the priest, with a show of wonder.

"No; nor would he be so now, did not he think to further some design of his own by it," rejoined Torillo, with a smile. "He has an object in view, and fancies that he can blind me."

"How so?"

"Listen, and I will tell you."

Torillo then disclosed to the priest his son s proposal in regard to Viola, winding up by pointing out to his companion what were clearly Ferdinand's intentions.

"Let it be just as he wishes," he continued; "and say you nothing to him that shall lead him to infer that I have spoken to you on the subject. If in the end, however, he manages to come out ahead, he is welcome to the prize. But I am neither dead nor sleeping. The ceremony—a proof of which, if we pursue this course, the law will demand to establish Ferdinand's title to the estate—shall take place to-night. I was about sending for you for that purpose, when your opportune arrival saved me the trouble. I take it for granted that you are ready to officiate."

"By the Virgin, Pedro, did you ever know me to refuse you a helping hand?" rejoined the priest.

"I did not," was the response.

"No, that you did not. 'Tis many years now since we agreed to aid and assist each other, *per fas et néfas*,* and I believe we have both kept pretty well by our promise."

"We have. And if you are satisfied, I am. But to what I was speaking about, again. Now, unless Ferdinand wins the girl's willing consent—and I have but little hope of his success—she will, doubtless, object and resist to the last extremity; but, of course, that must not interfere with the ceremony. When the chapel is closed up, it must be a loud noise indeed that can penetrate the open air; and even if it should, this house is so isolated that it would never reach human ear. And to guard against even the possibility of interruption, I will station Marco and the men around the house, so as to prevent the approach of any one whatever."

"Well, Pedro, I guess we won't be easily put out," rejoined the priest, with an air of easy rascality. "If the girl appeals to me I'll hand her over to you."

"Do so; and if she plead for mercy, I'll thunder in her ears anathemas upon her apostacy.

At that moment the same ringing which had startled Ferdinand and Viola, startled these two.

* By right or wrong; by any means.

Filled with a similar unaccountable alarm, they stared into each other's faces.

"It is the door-bell!" whispered the priest, at length.

"It is!" replied Torillo, in the same low tones.

Then followed a few moments of deep silence; and then Torillo walked quietly to the table, and rang the little bell. While yet his hand was upon the bell, the door opened, and Ferdinand entered hastily into the apartment.

"Some one is ringing at the door!" he said, addressing his father.

"I hear," was the response.

"Who can it be?"

"We shall soon see."

At that moment there was a light tap upon the door.

"Come in!" said Torillo.

The next instant Marco entered the room, bearing a letter, which he handed to his master. All three of the men looked vastly relieved. They had expected, they scarcely knew what.

"For you!" said Marco, in his usually brief and sententious manner.

"Who brought it?" demanded Torillo, while breaking the seal.

"A man."

There was a moment's pause, during which Torillo

perused the document. Then, lifting his eyes from the paper, he said—

"A man, I suppose. Did you inquire who he was?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"He said he was a porter at —— hotel."

"Is he gone?"

"Yes. He started right off."

"Did he act suspiciously?"

"No."

"Did he seem in a hurry to get away?"

"No."

"Everything, then, appeared to be just as it should?"

"Yes."

"That will do. You may go."

Just as Marco was in the act of closing the door, Torillo lifted his eyes the second time from the paper, to which he had again dropped them, and said, hastily—

"Marco!"

The man halted and turned round.

"Tell the porter not to admit any stranger past the gate, hereafter, without first communicating with me. That is all."

During this dialogue, Ferdinand and the priest had been looking on, with a considerable show of

wonder and curiosity. As Marco closed the door, Torillo turned towards them, and said—

"I suppose you are both of you, curious and anxious to know the contents of this;" and he held forth the letter. "Well, you shall be gratified. Hear!"

Torillo then read as follows:

"A gentleman just from Baltimore has a message to communicate with Mr. P. Torillo; but in consequence of present urgent business, and the necessity of leaving early in the morning, he cannot himself spare the time to call on Mr. T. He will, however, make it a point to be at his hotel—the ———, at ten o'clock this evening; and if Mr. T. can make it convenient to wait upon him then, he will be pleased to lay before him the communication with which he has been charged."

"It is now nearly nine," said Ferdinand, from habit referring to his watch.

"Inquire for Albert Summerfield, and you will be conducted to my room," continued Torillo, finishing the letter.

A pause of several moments followed the reading of this note, during which the three men seemed to be busy with their own thoughts.

"Somewhat singular," muttered the priest, breaking the silence. "Do you know of any one who at this time would be likely to send you a verbal message, as I take it this is, from the course pursued;

for were it written, the bearer might avoid all trouble by at once forwarding you the communication."

"Some things, father, do not bear to be written, still less to be trusted to the mails," was Torillo's response.

"True," replied the priest.

"Father Antonio might desire to communicate with me," pursued Torillo. "And under the circumstances he would be more likely to send a verbal than a written message, because the latter, in case of accident, could be used against us. This messenger must be one of us; and he is, probably, on business of the Order, which he cannot delay for private purposes; hence his inability to wait upon me."

"Still he might have sent you some token to that effect, which he does not," put in Ferdinand, fully as suspicious as the priest, and not pleased with a delay that threatened to retard the consummation of his purposes. "He does not even mention the name of any one in connection with the message."

"It may be a decoy," suggested the wary priest.

"I think not," rejoined Torillo. "It has an air of honesty that I will trust. And even were it to prove otherwise, what have I to fear? My character stands fair, even with the heretic community. And, as for the Baltimore affair—towards which your suspicions seem to tend, I think—I feel assured that everything

is safe in that quarter. Doubtless this message is to inform me of what transpired after the matter came out; which, in a measure, it must have done. To think otherwise were to doubt some of the most faithful servants of the Church."

"It may all be so," remarked the priest. "And yet I don't like the looks of this."

"Will you go, father?" inquired Ferdinand, suddenly.

"I shall," replied Torillo, emphatically. "I can lose nothing by it, and may gain information of importance. Be it as it may, I will run the risk."

At this Ferdinand and the priest exchanged a glance which seemed to say—There is no need of further argument—he is set.

"But now, Ferdinand," continued Torillo, turning to his son—"tell me what success you had with Viola?"

"None!" responded the young man, bitterly; the question vividly recalling to his mind the interview with his cousin. "She declared that she would rather die than marry me."

"As I thought," rejoined Torillo, with a portentous scowl. "And now, shall we compel her to become your wife, or shall we adopt the plan I first proposed? Either will suit me."

"I still think my suggestion the best, father," Fer-

dinand replied, by no means prepared to yield what he thought was his chance.

"So be it, then," rejoined Torillo. "When we return—for I want you both to accompany me; not that I fear anything, but that I would prefer having company to going alone—the ceremony shall be immediately performed, and in a day or two you can be prepared to start upon your bridal tour. I will myself see Viola, and prepare her for what now is to follow," he went on, seizing the little bell, and again ringing it.

The tintinnabulary sound had scarcely died away when Marco appeared in the door.

"Tell my niece," he continued, addressing himself to the man, "that I wish to see her here immediately. Say that I will not take a refusal. Away!"

As Marco disappeared, Torillo turned to Ferdinand and the priest, and said—

"Now leave me for a few moments. When I am ready I will call you."

Ferdinand and the priest were barely out of hearing, when Viola, looking more like a sheeted corpse than any thing human, slowly and languidly entered the apartment. A moment of deep silence followed her appearance, during which Torillo eyed the young girl as one might suppose a wild beast eyes its prey ere it makes the fatal leap. Viola trembled, and

sobbed like one whose heart was breaking with the weight of some great grief.

"So, girl!" at length hissed Torillo, between his set teeth; and Viola started nervously at the frightful intensity of his voice; "so, girl, you are determined to thwart me in every thing!"

"O, uncle, have you no pity?" murmured the young girl, looking up into Torillo's face pitifully and pleadingly.

"Pity is for women and dotards!" uttered her uncle in reply.

"God help me!" murmured poor Viola, burying her face in her hands. "On all sides am I beset."

"I offered you a chance, and you have refused it," continued Torillo, intensely. "You will not marry Ferdinand, you have told him. Think you that to starve in the vaults of this old house is better?"

Although Torillo had not expected any thing else, he was yet considerably put out on finding that Viola peremptorily refused to willingly and quietly marry his son. Reflection had soon convinced him of the many selfish advantages arising from Ferdinand's plan, not the least of which was, that the criminal part of the transaction would thus be shifted to another's shoulders, even though that other were indeed his own child—flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. But that the ultimate result—no matter whether his own plan or that of Ferdinand's were

adopted—would turn out to his own exclusive advantage, he had not the slightest doubt.

That Viola was greatly amazed at learning of her uncle's complicity with Ferdinand in the marriage plot, considering the character of the scene through which she had but just passed—for it will be remembered that all of Ferdinand's language directly tended to produce a contrary impression—is something not in the least to be wondered at. Still she made no reference to the now undisguised collusion, feeling that to do so would be but a useless expenditure of time and strength.

"As surely as you live, girl, you threw away your last chance when you refused to marry Ferdinand," continued the false-tongued, hypocritical old man, after waiting a few moments, and not receiving any reply from his niece.

"I could not marry him, uncle; he is too—too," and the young girl hesitated, really afraid to finish the sentence.

"Well, too what?" demanded Torillo, fiercely.

"Too wicked, uncle!"

"Too wicked, hey!" rejoined Torillo, derisively. "Well, I suppose he is for a saint like you. Doubtless, you would have preferred that smooth-tongued heretic!"

Viola tottered, gasped for breath, and clutched her bosom tightly with both hands. In a few moments,

however, she recovered herself, and then in low, tremulous tones, she said,

"O, uncle, spare me! If it is my fortune that you so covet, take it all; only let me go. I will never, never, trouble you again."

"A likely story, indeed!" rejoined Torillo, with a bitter sneer. "Why not at once counsel me to put the halter around my own neck? No, no, girl!—outside of these walls you *never* again go alive, unless you go as Ferdinand's wife!"

"Then is my doom sealed!" murmured Viola, despairingly.

"Aye, that is it, unless you quickly change your mind!" rejoined Torillo, deceitfully. "And think not to escape—hope not for a change. Beneath this old house you may die and rot, and not a living creature will ever know what has become of you. If inquiry should be made, there are an hundred plausible excuses, any one of which would allay all prying curiosity."

"O, uncle," sobbed Viola, now almost entirely exhausted by the power of her emotions; and at the same time she knelt down and clasped her little hands together; "oh, uncle, how have I deserved this? what have I done to make you treat me so?"

"What have you done?" yelled Torillo, almost beside himself with the workings of his black and

wicked soul. "What have you done? You stand between me and wealth!"

"Have I not said, Take it all!" and the tears chased each other in streams down the young girl's face.

"O, yes; and let you go free to inform on me! Never, girl, never!"

"For the love of heaven, uncle, be a little merciful!" pleaded Viola. "For the sake of my mother—*your* sister—show some mercy to me. O, let not my prayer be entirely in vain! You are human, uncle! your heart cannot be entirely turned to stone, so that the voice of a suffering woman, and your own kindred, too, will not reach its core! Pity me then—pity me!"

"So pleaded my wife, Viola, when she stood in the way, and refused to profit by my counsel. And as she pleaded vainly, so do you. And her fate, too, shall be yours. In the very dungeon wherein she breathed her last—for she died here, in this house, a prisoner—shall you spend the few remaining days of your existence, if you still continue obstinate."

"O, uncle, you cannot mean this!" cried Viola, with agonizing intensity. "You could not be so wicked!"

"I could be all that I say, Viola, and more. But, marry Ferdinand, and I will spare you."

The old hypocrite did not say that no harm should come to her—he only said that *he* would spare her.

At the same time he hoped that Viola would interpret his reply in the former sense.

"Refuse, and you know the alternative!" he added. "I give you until midnight to decide. But, remember that escape is utterly impossible."

Torillo turned from the apartment, and Viola at length succeeded in dragging her weary body to her own room.

But who shall describe the overwhelming agony of her feelings?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

KENNETH EGERTON AND SCIPIO IN PHILADELPHIA.—MORE COUNTER-PLOTTING.—DEPARTURE OF THE JESUIT, FERDINAND, AND FATHER RENOUF FROM THE OLD MANSION.—ARRIVAL OF KENNETH AND SCIPIO.—PREPARATIONS TO RESCUE VIOLA.

A SHORT time subsequent to the arrival at the old mansion house of the bearer of the note—the delivery of which we have already seen—two persons in a row boat noiselessly approached the shore at the bottom of the hill on the river side of the building. The oars were muffled, and the approach of the boat could not be heard even the most trifling distance. As soon as the boat was made fast—which was done by burying the small anchor in the gravelly beach—the men landed. One was a white man, and the other a negro. The reader will not be long in recognizing Kenneth Egerton and Scipio.

And here let us pause for a brief explanation.

It will be remembered that it was on the morning of the third day—the third after Viola's departure from Baltimore—that Kenneth and the negro also

quitted that city. On the morning of the fourth day they arrived at Philadelphia; and so anxious and impatient was Kenneth, and so fearful that he had lost too much time, that he commenced operations instantly. At first he thought of laying the whole matter before the authorities, and of demanding their assistance; but reflection soon convinced him that he would be little likely to accomplish his aim by such a course. He had nothing besides his own word to back up his declarations, and a powerful and insidious foe to contend with. Besides which, the publicity such a course would give the affair, would unquestionably put Viola's persecutors on the alert, and give them ample time to remove her, or adopt some plan to defeat inquiry. In view of these things, he determined to effect the young girl's release—if it was to be accomplished at all—by stratagem.

Immediately after his arrival he started out, accompanied by Scipio, to reconnoiter the old mansion house. While at the hospital, Viola had given him, very fortunately, an excellent description of the place; and after approaching the house from the public road as near as was practicable, he retraced his steps for some distance, and then struck off into a by-path which brought him to the river, where he secured a boat. He then rowed up and down the stream, opposite the building, frequently; and even approached the spot at which we have seen him, at

a later hour, land. In that direction he knew the window of Viola's room faced, unless, indeed, her apartment had been changed, of which he had no chance of knowing. Altogether, his observations convinced him that from the river was the best, in fact the only point, by which he could hope to approach the house with the slightest chance of accomplishing anything. After he had returned to his hotel, he shut himself up in his room to reflect. Finally, he decided upon making an attempt that night—little as he had to work on—to rescue Viola. That the young girl might not be there—that she might already have been removed, were thoughts which presented themselves to his mind, creating in his heart the most poignant and insufferable emotions. Upon chance alone he had to depend ; and though naturally strong of heart, some show of despondency, under the desperate circumstances, was unavoidable.

After revolving in his mind innumerable schemes, he finally decided upon the plan which we are about describing. As a preliminary step towards its accomplishment, he resolved, if possible, to decoy the young girl's uncle away from the house ; trusting and hoping that those who remained behind might not be either as vigilant, cunning, or dangerous.

Hope—and a rather forlorn one—was all that he had to buoy him up.

In pursuance of the plan which he had resolved

upon adopting, he set about writing a note. After examining the subject carefully, he finally transcribed the one which we have already seen delivered.

By this time it was nearly eight o'clock, and quite dark; and the hazy appearance of the atmosphere indicated a rising storm. After giving one whom he found he could trust, proper directions for the safe delivery of the note, himself and Scipio started off ahead. The rest is already known.

And now we will again take up the thread of our story.

As soon as the boat was properly secured, and a few moments were devoted to observation, Kenneth and Scipio proceeded to mount the hill, screening themselves from observation—in case any one should be on the watch—by carefully creeping along from tree to tree. As they neared the top of the hill, Kenneth commanded a halt. At that moment a few straggling drops of rain, large and heavy, came pattering down among the branches of the trees; and the moon, which had hitherto been dimly shining, was totally obscured.

"There is a storm brewing," whispered Kenneth. "But that, however, is better for us."

"Dat's so!" responded Scipio, in tones no louder than his master's. "Harderer him come down, doe, all de gooderer."

"All is quiet so far," continued Kenneth. "Let

us now get a little higher up—but be careful. The cracking of a twig might discover us, and ruin all. Besides, I don't believe that the inmates of yonder house would stand very long at cutting our throats, and tossing us into the Schuylkill."

"Dat's a comf'able 'flection, Marster Egaton," rejoined Scipio, drily. "But I guess afore dey dun do dat, doe, I'd make some o' dem 'quainted wid dis yere cheese knife," and Scipio displayed a very ugly looking piece of steel.

"Be careful, Scipio, and remember my words," said Kenneth, emphatically. "We must resort to such a course only in the direst extremity."

"'Zactly, Marster Egaton. But I tink dat would be a 'stremity."

"Well, yes, it would. But now let us move on."

Quietly the two now ascended the hill, until they had almost reached the level ground, when Kenneth again commanded a halt. They were now within some fifty feet of the east side of the house. Completely screened behind the trunks of two large trees, they were, however, effectually concealed from observation.

Again some few large, heavy drops of rain rattled among the branches of the trees.

"Dere's a light up dar, Marster Egaton!" whispered Scipio, pointing toward the house.

"I see it," responded Kenneth. "From the young

lady's description, it is in the room she formerly occupied. Pray heaven her apartment has not been changed! If now she only knew of our presence here, she might assist us greatly."

At that moment Viola flitted past the window, on her way down stairs to meet Ferdinand, as it subsequently appeared. Slight as was the view which Kenneth obtained, he yet instantly recognized the young girl.

"It is Viola!" he murmured, eagerly. "Heaven bless her and give us success!"

"Hark! Marster Egaton!" suddenly exclaimed the negro, after both had remained quiet for some length of time, without seeing anything further.

"Some one is approaching the house," rejoined Kenneth, bending forward in an attitude of keen attention. "It is probably my messenger."

"Dar he goes!" whispered Scipio, as a dark form moved across the lawn toward the great door of the house.

"It is he!" exclaimed Kenneth, as the person passed in full view.

The new comer rang the bell quickly, and the summons brought Marco in a few moments to the door. Almost at the same instant Viola again glided past the window, on her return to her own apartment after the interview with Ferdinand. That, of course, drew the attention of Kenneth and Scipio in another

direction, and, consequently, what passed between Marco and the man was almost entirely lost to them.

"There she goes again!" whispered Kenneth, as Viola passed the window; and as he spoke he clutched the negro tightly by the arm. "Even at this distance I can distinguish the pale and haggard look of her face."

"An' dar he goes!" rejoined Scipio, as the man turned from the door, and began quickly to retrace his steps. "Dey got de 'pistle, Marster Egaton!"

"They have, Scipio; and now for the result," responded Kenneth, his eyes alternately roving from the window to the door, and *vice versa*. If the letter does not draw the young lady's uncle away—and I must say there are nine chances it will not to one that it will—I shall be at a loss whether to proceed, or, for the present, give up our undertaking. And yet I cannot bear to think of the latter contingency, feeling, as I do, that every moment is of the greatest importance."

"Seems to me, Marster Egaton, dat I'd nebber gib it up!" rejoined the negro, whose sympathy, from various causes combined, was deeply enlisted in behalf of Viola.

"It is a desperate chance, Scipio, at the best," rejoined Kenneth. "We may succeed; but there is every probability that we shall not. Still, nothing ventured, nothing won."

Again Viola passed by the window, and this time, it will be remembered, she was going down to meet her uncle.

"There again!" whispered Kenneth, greatly astonished. "What can be the meaning of this?"

"Guess she am walkin' up an' down de room," rejoined Scipio. "Seems to me she mus' be in 'flictions."

"That cannot be or she would repass sooner, and more frequently," returned Kenneth, in anxious tones. "No! she goes out of the room. What would I not give to know the condition of things inside those walls!"

Both now remained quiet for some time, alternately watching the front of the building, and the window of Viola's room.

As the young girl returned again to her apartment, after the interview with her uncle, she, of course, again passed by the window; the room—or rather the door and window—being so situated that she must necessarily do so.

"Again she goes back," said Kenneth. "And she presses her forehead with her hand. Some mischief is afoot, I know. God grant that I may be in time to prevent its consummation."

"Sum one comin' out o' de house, Marster Egaton," whispered Scipio, attracting Kenneth's attention from the window. "One, two, free," counted the ne-

gro, as Torillo, Ferdinand, and the priest, emerged into the open air. Marco, who followed them, remained just inside the door. The light, which the latter had brought with him, and placed on a table in the hall, cast a bright gleam over the forms of all four.

"The first one there is the young lady's uncle," whispered back Kenneth. "I know him from her description. One of the others—the youngest looking of the two, doubtless—must be his son; but who the third party is I know not. '—sh! they speak. We may learn something."

Kenneth and Scipio fell into silence, and bent their ears to hear what was said.

"It is dark and cloudy," remarked the priest, with an oath.

"Yes—it bids fair for a storm. The sky is very lowering," rejoined Ferdinand, gazing up at the heavens.

"The more reason that we should hurry!" exclaimed Torillo. "Besides, we have but little time to reach the place by the hour specified."

"Do you hear that, Scipio?" whispered Kenneth.

"I hear 'em, Marster," rejoined the negro, with a low chuckle.

"Somehow, I don't half like this business," remarked the priest, but without addressing any one in particular. "As the old women generally say, I

feel it in my bones that something's going wrong. But, I suppose, there's no use expostulating," he murmured, in a low key—too low for either Kenneth or Scipio to distinguish the words.

"For my own part, I shall not say anything more about it," remarked Ferdinand, with a show of indifference that he did not feel. In his heart he well knew the utter impracticability of turning his father from any set purpose; and therefore had resigned himself, under the circumstances, with the best grace he could. "At the same time," he continued, "I can't see how much is either to be gained or lost by it, except, in the latter respect, some invaluable time; unless, indeed,"—and he ventured this remark with the faint hope that it might alarm his father, and by that means change his purpose—"unless, indeed, the authorities of Baltimore have gotten on the track of a certain assassin. In that case it might be somewhat dangerous."

"It *was* Viola's uncle, then, who waylaid me!" said Kenneth, mentally. "I thought I recognized the voice."

"Peace, boy, peace!" hissed Torillo, fiercely, turning upon his son. "Keep that tongue between your teeth, or wag it at somebody else's expense. And when I want your counsel, either of you, I will ask it. Now, if you like not to accompany me, stay behind. I'll go alone. But, go I will, let the cost be what it

may! Marco!" he added, addressing his menial, "turn the dog loose, and keep a strict watch around the house until I return. Remember what I say!"

With that Torillo started off down the avenue, and Marco came outside, closed the door, and passed round the corner of the building, disappearing out of sight on the west side.

"Drat the dog!" muttered Scipio, as his quick ear caught Torillo's order. "He'll spile all, Marster Egaton!"

"'—sh!" said Kenneth, quickly. "See, he goes alone."

"The old man's in one of his stubborn moods," whispered Ferdinand to the priest, at this moment. Torillo had started forward. "We might as well follow him," he added. "Come on!"

"I suppose so!" rejoined the priest, snappishly.

As these two then started after Torillo, Kenneth, who had been holding his breath in anticipation of their movements, vented a sigh of relief, and murmured, thankfully—

"Heaven be praised, they go too!"

At the same moment the rattling of chains struck upon his ear; and the next, a huge black mastiff bounded into the open space in front of the house.

"Dar's dat funnel dog!" muttered Scipio. "How 'voking! how, what de debble dus people keep dogs fur, anyhow!"

"'—sh!" whispered Kenneth. "Here comes the man."

As he spoke, Marco came around the corner of the house, and halted when within some few feet of the hall-door. After looking up at the sky, then peering out into the darkness, and finally addressing the dog, he entered the house, locking the door behind him. The click of the lock as the bolt shot into its place, was distinctly heard by Kenneth and Scipio, and reassured the former of the utter impracticability of effecting an entrance in that way.

The moment Marco disappeared, the dog began scenting the ground, noseing around among the plants and shrubs. And again the fitful rain-drops rattled among the branches of the trees. Some time passed in this manner—Kenneth and Scipio afraid to make the least movement in dread of prematurely alarming the dog, and thus betraying their presence ; and yet unable to imagine any way of getting rid of him.

During this time, too, the rain had begun to pour down in a thick, heavy, inundating volume. It was one of those occasional storms which sometimes deluge the earth ; in a moment, as it were, overflowing every practicable point. And with the rain, too, came the quick, terrible cracking of the eternal thunder, and the sharp, vivid flashing of forked lightning.

"It's coming now, Scipio!" whispered Kenneth, alluding to the storm.

"Golly, dat's so!" responded the negro.

"Time passes, too," continued Kenneth. "We must make some move or we shall waste the time and accomplish nothing. The young lady's uncle, and his companions will, no doubt, hurry back quickly when they discover the cheat, even if the storm does not prevent them from going on at all."

"Yes, but, Marster Egaton, how we gwain' for to do eny ting wid dat 'funnel black dog out dar? Shu' as we move, he'll bark!"

"See, he draws near us! he scents us!" said Kenneth, as the dog with his nose close down to the ground gradually drew nearer to the spot where himself and Scipio were standing. "Draw your knife," he added, setting the example, "and the moment he makes at us—which it is likely he will do as soon as he discovers us—stab him. Let your blow be quick and sure, so as to prevent him from giving any alarm."

"I'se dar, Marster Egaton!" responded Scipio. "I once fit a bloodhoun', an' I knows sumfin' 'bout it."

As the last word passed the negro's lips, a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the whole scene, revealing the great dog within a few feet of them. In the same moment the brute also spied the negro, and venting a low growl, which he ended with a quick,

sharp bark, he sprang full at Scipio's throat. But as the black had just declared, he had had some experience in that way, and he met the animal's charge firmly and steadily. Catching the dog by the throat with his left hand, with his right he buried the knife deep in his head. It was a powerful and well-directed blow.

At the same moment that the dog sprang at Scipio, Kenneth dashed at the furious beast, and almost simultaneously with the negro ran his knife through the brute's body. Without a groan the dog expired. Both then seized hold of the body, and dragging it quickly a little further down the hill, placed it against the trunk of a tree, and then returned to their former position. All this occurred within the space of a very few moments after the dog barked.

"Are you hurt, Scipio?" inquired Kenneth, as soon as they had regained their place of concealment.

"Not a scratch, Marster Egaton! Dat dog wasn't no 'count arter all."

Some movement at the house now arrested the attention of Kenneth and Scipio, and both instantly became silent. Directly the hall door was flung open, and the forms of two men appeared reflected on the light in the background. It was Marco and one of the servants. After looking about them for some time, the latter said to the former—

"I don't see the dog nor hear him."

"Nor I," rejoined Marco.

"I heard him bark, though, I'd swear."

"So did I."

"He was angry, too."

"Yes. Let us look around."

Marco passed down the steps followed by the man; and Kenneth and Scipio watched their movements with great anxiety, and some alarm. The storm, however, was in favor of our adventurers, as it prevented too strict a search from being made.

Marco and the man, after drawing up their coat collars, and each bestowing a choice expletive on the raging storm, passed around from the front to the west or off side of the house, from thence around to the rear or north end, and from thence again to the east side, in front of which, of course, Kenneth and Scipio were stationed. As they came around the north-east corner of the building, a flash of lightning revealed their presence to the concealed men.

"Every thing looks right," remarked the man to Marco, as they passed along.

"Yes," rejoined the latter. "Most likely the dog barked at the lightning, and then ran off into the woods."

"How it does rain," muttered the man, with an oath. "The dog ought to be choked for bringing us out in such a storm, and without a cause."

"Let us get in. He will, no doubt, return in a few

moments, and nobody can approach the house while he is loose."

"'Cept we," whispered Scipio, with a low chuckle of satisfaction.

The men had now reached the door, and after taking another look around, they reëntered the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

VIOLA'S ESCAPE NEARLY ACCOMPLISHED.

"DE'RE gone, Marster Egaton," whispered Scipio. "De funnel fools, to tink dat yere dog was eny 'count!"

"Now's our time," said Kenneth. "The ground is clear, and for the present no further examination will be made. I take it these fellows are not as vigilant as their master is; and we may be thankful they are not."

"Dat's just so, Marster Egaton!"

"Now listen to me, Scipio," continued Kenneth, speaking quickly. "Much is to be done, and there is little time to do it in. It is quite evident that the only way for us to communicate with the lady, or render her any assistance, with the least chance of success, is by the window of her apartment. To enter the house any other way is out of the question. This I want you to attempt—not that I seek to avoid any trouble or danger myself, but that I think it advisable for the success of our enterprise. Without

a doubt the young lady has been led to think that I am dead, and my sudden appearance in her room might create a scene that would discover and ruin all. Do you understand me?"

"I does, Marster Egaton."

"And are you willing to run the risk, and incur the danger?"

"Dun you spoke 'bout it, Marster Egaton. 'Sides you are in jest as much danger down yere as ef you was up dar. Dat's so, now!"

"You are about right, Scipio. But can you climb?"

"Like a monkey, Marster Egaton!"

"Approach the house softly, then," continued Kenneth. "When you think you are near enough, pick up a pebble, and cast it against yonder window. Doubtless that will attract the young lady's attention—at least we will hope so—and draw her to the window. You can then tell her—but be sure and speak in very low tones—that a friend who is familiar with her unfortunate position has sent you to release her; and if she will make a rope of something by which you can enter her room, you will see what can be done. Mention your name; she will probably remember it, and that may—no doubt, will—induce her to believe you. Should she question you more, however,—and it is reasonable to suppose she may—tell her that one who knew Kenneth Egerton is wait-

ing to receive her ; but don't say that it is myself, for it might overpower her, and thus frustrate our plans. Before lowering her down, see that she is wrapped up thickly and warmly, or this driving storm may prove too much for her tender frame. When she is down, descend yourself, and rejoin me. Do you now understand what I have been telling you ?"

" 'Cisely, Marster Egaton, 'cisely. But s'pose she won't 'lieve me, how den ?"

" Then we must resort to some other method. But I don't anticipate any trouble in that respect, Scipio."

" And sposen she ain't got noten' for to make a rope, nudder, Marster Egaton, how den ?"

" Let her tie some of her clothing together—that will answer every purpose."

" Dat's so, Marster Egaton, dat's so !"

" Now go," continued Kenneth. " But be quick and cautious ; for as I said before, we have little time to spare. I will remain here and watch. In case of danger, depend upon my assistance. I will never desert you."

All this time the rain was pouring down in torrents—the thunder bellowing, and the lightning flashing with almost blinding brilliancy.

With a quiet, noiseless movement, Scipio cautiously approached the house. When directly under the

window of Viola's apartment—from which still gleamed the reflections of a light, though now the curtains were dropped—he stooped down and picked up a few small pebbles. Casting them at the window, the stones struck the glass with a sharp, rattling sound. A moment after, Viola, pale and haggard, appeared at the window, drew aside the curtains, and looked out; but the intense darkness concealed every object, and she disappeared without giving the incident any further attention; doubtless, attributing the noise which had attracted her attention to the storm.

"Now jest look a dat!" muttered Scipio, audibly; in his disappointment forgetting some of his caution.

"——sh!" said Kenneth, who had easily caught the sound of his voice. "Try again."

The next moment a few more well directed pebbles rattled against the glass; and again Viola appeared at the window, and drew aside the curtains. As she peered through the window, with her face pressed tightly to the glass, and shaded by her hands, a flash of lightning lit up the surrounding space, and doubtless, revealed to her the form of the negro, for instantly after she raised the sash and inquired,—

"Who's there?"

"Scipio, Missus. Dun you 'member, Scipio? But fust let me tell you to spoke berry low, 'kase we ain't got many friens' 'bout yere."

"Yes, I do remember you," rejoined Viola; and the thought recalled an agonizing memory of Kenneth. "But what has brought you here at this time of night? and such a night, too."

"I cum to git you out o' dis yere, ef ag'eeable. Dat's so!"

"Are you all alone?" demanded Viola, in trembling tones, as a hope of liberty, bright as the sun after a raging storm, welled up in her bosom.

"O, no, Missus. Dar's a frien' o' your's out yere. Dat's so!"

"A friend! Come to save me!" murmured Viola, tremblingly. "You are not deceiving me, are you?"

"Ef I am I hope I may broke my neck afore I git up dar," replied the negro, indignantly.

"But how are you to reach this window?" Viola inquired. "The distance is great."

"Marster Eg—," began the momentarily thoughtless negro; but immediately correcting himself, though with some confusion, he continued—"no, not dat. I mean your frien' out yere, he say, ef you ain't got no rope, Missus—an' I don't 'spec you hab—you jest take an' tie sum o' your gownds togedder, an' lower dem out. But, Missus, you mus' be mighty quick. Dat's so, now!"

"I will! I will!" cried Viola, the prospect of freedom—the hope of escaping the clutches of her uncle, inspiring her mind with new courage, and her body

with new strength. "I would try to get a rope from the store-room, but that the door of my apartment has been locked on me."

"Well, nebber mind now, Missus; only jest hurry wid de odder tings," rejoined Scipio, with eager impatience. "Golly, how him rain!" he continued, hugging up close to the wall.

It was true that Viola had been locked in her room. After returning to her apartment from the interview with her uncle, grown desperate with the emergency of her situation, she would have made an effort—and unquestionably, under the circumstances, a fruitless one—to escape; but on trying her room door she found that it was locked. And thus it happened. At Torillo's direction the woman Elise had followed the young girl up stairs, and turned the key upon her. And then he felt secure of her. Not for a moment did he think that she would attempt to escape by the window, or that any outside effort would be made to release her. Kenneth dead—as he imagined—there was little danger of such a contingency as the latter. If he had thought otherwise, Viola would have been removed to some other and more secure apartment. Nor did the young girl think of escaping by the window; in truth, without some aid she was unequal to such a task.

Directly after Viola disappeared within the room, Kenneth—who could see the movements that were

made, though indistinctly—called to the negro, and Scipio quietly retraced his steps to where his master was concealed.

"If I understood rightly, Scipio, the young lady has credited your story," whispered Kenneth.

"She hab, Marster Egaton," rejoined the negro, sententiously. "An' she am now gederin' up sum o' her gownds for to tie togedder, as you 'rected. But, Marster Egaton, did you ebber see it rain so funnel hard afore?"

"The storm is very heavy," rejoined Kenneth. "But still we should not complain, for in every way it favors us greatly. Should any one within the house happen to hear us, the noise will most probably be attributed to the rushing of the wind and rain, and it is not likely that there is any one watching outside. But we must no longer parley about the storm. It cannot now be a great while before the absent men will return, and should they arrive before we are off, the consequences may prove of the most fatal character. I would die rather than surrender Viola, and what could we two do in a hand to hand encounter against five? and that number, we have seen, would certainly be opposed to us."

"Rudder long odds, Marster Egaton," responded Scipio.

"Yes, too much for us to risk, if we can possibly avoid it. But, come, let us approach the house. I

will go with you now. As soon as you are in the young lady's apartment lower her down. I will stand beneath to receive her."

After listening a moment, Kenneth and Scipio cautiously approached the house, striking directly across the open space in the neighborhood of Viola's apartment. Their place of concealment happened to lay opposite the south-east corner of the house, while Viola's room was situated in the north-east corner. Kenneth then stationed himself close up against the wall; but Scipio stood further out and more exposed to view. Almost immediately after they reached the spot, Viola reappeared at the window, and cautiously scrutinized the level space beneath her.

"Hist!" said Scipio. "I'se yere, Missus. Hab you got de tings ready?"

"I have," responded Viola, her voice shaking with the variety of her emotions.

"Am dey 'trong?"

"Yes."

"Den make um fast dar, an' lower away."

"It is fast," responded the young girl, as she lowered down the substitute for a rope. "Now, heaven help you, if you be true and honest!"

Scipio caught the end as soon as it came within his reach, and bracing his feet against the wall, he began to make the ascent. Kenneth watched the

began to make the ascent. Kenneth watched the sure footed and powerful fellow with painful anxiety. At last he reached the window, and throwing his legs across the sill, he disappeared within the room.

We will follow him.

CHAPTER XXX.

VIOLA'S ESCAPE CONTINUED.—ALMOST DISCOVERED.—FREE AT LAST.—CROSSING THE SCHUYLKILL.

For a moment after his feet touched the floor, the negro remained motionless, panting for breath. The ascent had been an arduous one, and it had taxed even his iron nerves. Viola silently regarded him with feelings too full for utterance. Was it indeed liberty that he brought her? or was it some other trick to lure her into greater danger? These thoughts swept through the young girl's mind.

"De high golly, Missus, but dat was hard work," said Scipio, at length, in a whisper.

Then turning to the window he began quickly to draw in the line, saying—

"Missus, we mus' be quick afore sumbody cotch us. Dat's so, now!"

"But my uncle!" rejoined Viola, breathlessly. "Should he discover us—and I fear he may—he would murder us all, I feel convinced."

"Fine ole man, dat uncle o' yourn, I'se no doubt,"

rejoined Scipio. "But you see, Marster—he's down dar waitin' for you ; an' a boat's down to the ribber dar waitin' for us all—Marster, he 'ticed him an' two udder fellers away, so dat de coast would be purty clear. Dat's so !"

"Away ! Uncle and Ferdinand away !" muttered Viola, bewildered by the passing events.

"Free fellers went away, 'cause I seed um go ; an' Marster he sent the 'pistle what 'ticed um away."

"But who is your master ?" Viola inquired, eagerly. Then pressing her hand to her forehead, she continued, as if communing with herself—"it is strange who could feel such an interest in my behalf ; and stranger still who could be so familiar with my hapless condition. I know not what to think. What if it be but a plot concealing some greater danger ? Greater danger ! Can I be in greater danger than I have been ? than I am in here ? And this man seems honest ! He knew Kenneth, too ! Shall I not run the risk ?"

Viola had thus expressed herself aloud, and as her words struck on the negro's ears, his eyes distended with astonishment.

"Dis ain't no plot," he said. "Dat is, 'taint no plot to hurt you, Missus. An' as for dis niggar's bein' honest, dat's shu. 'Sides dar's Marster Ega——"

Scipio suddenly called to mind Kenneth's caution, and came to a dead pause ; but Viola—now more

fully alive than before to every word that was spoken—had caught the half-uttered name, and her face expressed the varied emotions that it conjured up.

"Who, who, did you say?" she inquired, in a breathless whisper. "Tell me, who is your master, and who waits for me? Tell me, or I cannot trust myself from this room!"

"Well, now, Marster tole me not to, Missus, 'kase it might 'fere wid our 'scape. But ef you won't 'lieve me, an'ell jest keep still, an' not holler, an' be mighty quick, I'll whisper him to you."

"Anything! everything!" rejoined Viola, breathlessly. "Only, in mercy relieve me from this suspense."

First drawing up close to the young girl—who stood there the very picture of anxious expectation—Scipio then brought his mouth in immediate proximity with her ear, and whispered—

"Now take car, Missus. 'Member what I tole you, an' dun you holler."

"Go on!" murmured Viola, intensely.

"Well, you see," continued Scipio, in the lowest possible whisper, as if he thought that speaking so would prevent his communication from having too great an effect—"you see, Marster Egaton warn't killed as dey fought; an' he's down dar under de winder waitin' for you."

A loud, piercing shriek, not of agony, but of over-

powering emotions, burst through Viola's white lips, and rang throughout the old house; and then the young girl sank unconsciously to the floor. Thus was precipitated the very catastrophe which Kenneth had endeavored to avoid.

Scipio started, and gazed around with wild amazement. So bewildered was he that he knew not what to do, and his first impulse was to jump out of the window.

"De high golly!" he cried. "Ef dis yere ain't 'funnelly unfortenit. What'll Marster Egaton say, now? An' what'll we do yere?"

Viola had already began to display some signs of reviving; and at the same moment the clatter of footsteps was heard upon the stairs, though as yet some distance off.

In perfect desperation, Scipio started forward, and raising Viola from the floor, he placed her upright on a chair; then shaking the young girl violently, he whispered quickly—

"For de lub o' Hebben, Missus, try to 'flect. Dar's sumbody cummin up stars. Make sum 'scuse to 'ceive dem!"

Then leaving the young girl—who was fast returning to a consciousness of her position—with lightning speed he dashed the knotted clothing under the bed, and panting from the excitement, and the velocity of his motions, rolled himself after them, the

valance effectually concealing him from view. He had barely accomplished this when the door of the apartment opened, and into the room hurried Marco, and the woman Elise, wonder and astonishment depicted upon their faces.

"Was it not you, Miss Viola, who screamed so dreadfully?" inquired Elise, in hurried tones.

"It was," responded the young girl, who had now summoned all her faculties to her assistance, and was revolving in her mind some suitable excuse.

"Why, what caused you to do so? Did anything frighten you?"

"The window, too, is open, and the storm beating in hard," said Marco to Elise; and at the same time he turned to the window, and lowered the sash. "May I ask, Miss Viola," he continued, turning to the young girl, "why you should have your window open on such a night as this?"

Viola's heart beat fast and furious, but still she managed to answer calmly—

"I was terribly frightened. I felt sick, and thought I would open the window to get a little air; and while I was in the act, a flash of lightning suddenly shot athwart the sky, and totally blinded me. It was so sudden and powerful as to make me scream out. But I am over it now." And then in her own mind she said—"God forgive the falsehood!"

And with her, we too may hope that He pardoned

the utterance of that which probably could only save her life, or preserve her from a fate worse even than death.

"O, that was all, was it?" muttered Marco, all his suspicions allayed by Viola's apparently ingenuous manner. "Better not go to the window again. Come, Elise," he continued, addressing the woman, and turning towards the door.

"Do you wish any help? or would you like me to stay with you?" inquired Elise of Viola.

"Thank you, nothing. It is all over now, and I would prefer being alone," responded the young girl, anxious to get rid of the woman; and yet afraid to betray too great a desire for fear of arousing suspicion. "It was only a momentary fright, which has passed off as quickly as it took possession of me."

"Well, just as you say," rejoined the woman.

Marco and Elise then quitted the apartment; and Viola threw herself forward and listened to hear whether they locked the door, which she now hoped they would. Slowly but surely the key turned, and at the sound the young girl's heart beat easier. Then she heard the pit-a-pat of their feet as they descended the softly carpeted stairs.

It may be well to remark here that under other circumstances Viola's scream would have passed by unheeded—that is, by the domestics. But as her uncle was absent they were at a loss to account for

the outburst, and hence felt it their duty to inquire into the matter. The result we have seen.

Meanwhile Kenneth was in a state of horrible alarm and anxiety. Looking anxiously for the descent of Viola, the sudden scream struck upon his ear like a death knell.

"Gracious Heaven, what is that?" he exclaimed, in the most alarming tones. "O, what can have happened? What shall I do?"

For a moment he stood motionless, as if bereft of every faculty. Then he turned his face up to the window, and called quickly on Scipio—but there was no response. Then the bustle which had followed the scream—and which had reached his ears—ceased, and all was quiet. After waiting a few seconds, he retraced his steps quickly, and cautiously, to his hiding place among the trees.

"I had better be calm and wait a little," he said, mentally. "Things may yet come off better than I suppose. The storm, and many other circumstances combined, may even yet mislead the people about the house. In fact, the rushing of the wind and rain may even entirely drown the scream. I must not be precipitate, hard as it is to remain quiet under such an uncertainty. But of one thing I am determined"—and he set his teeth, and clenched his hands;—"I will not leave here without Viola, if I have to beard them all."

With his eyes fixed intently on the window of Viola's room we will leave Kenneth, and return to the young girl's apartment.

As soon as Marco and Elise had vanished, Scipio thrust out his great woolly head from beneath the bed, his eyes sparkling with satisfaction.

"Am dey clar gone, Missus?" he inquired, in a whisper.

"O, yes," responded Viola, now again breathless with anxiety. "They are out of hearing."

"Berry fortenit dat dey didn't 'spec noting," he continued, crawling out. "You dun most spile ebbery ting, Missus. De high golly, but we was a most in a fix. I fought dis niggar's time had cum, shu. You dun gib a purty good 'scuse, howsomdever. Dat's so!"

"O, yes; but come, let us be quick now," rejoined Viola, eagerly. "My uncle may return, or the people about the house grow suspicious, and watch. You cannot imagine what bad creatures they are—I never did till lately—and from what a terrible fate you are helping me to escape. Come, let us away, while yet there may be a chance."

"Dey's not berry highly spoken ub, I 'lieve," returned Scipio, very seriously. "I'se heerd Marster Egaton spoke o' dem, Missus."

"Dear Kenneth!" murmured the young girl, clasp-

ing her hands together with sudden joy. "Come, come, let us go!"

"Ef you hadn't hollered so, Missus, we'd a bin away afore dis yere time. 'Spec Marster Egaton gib me Jessie for tellin' you."

"O, I could not help it," returned Viola, earnestly. "The joyful news was too much for my poor weak brain. But, O, come, don't let us delay now!"

"Well, we won't, Missus. But jest you stay dar, an' keep berry quiet, while I 'connoiter. Fust I'll put out dis yere light, fo' fea' dat sumbody might be out dar,"—and he pointed through the window—"dat it wouldn't be agee'able to scrape eny 'quaintance wid jest now. We can see jest as well in de dark, doe sum folks mightn't tink so. Dat's so!"

Viola made no objection; and, after extinguishing the light, Scipio cautiously approached the window, raised the sash, and looked down. Nothing was to be seen or heard, but the rainy mist, and the rushing of water. As the negro put forth his head a heavy clap of thunder reverberated far and near, seeming to shake the very foundations of the earth, and a vivid flash of lightning rendered everything visible. Kenneth—who had never removed his eyes from the window—instantly caught sight of the black, and started towards the house. Scipio heard the footsteps, and very correctly judging it to be his master, exclaimed—

"Hist!"

"Hist!" responded Kenneth.

"Am dat you, Marster Egaton?" Scipio inquired, in a low whisper.

"Yes. But have you been discovered?"

"Not 'xactly, Marster Egaton; but a berry close shabe. Shall I lower de lady?"

"Yes; and be quick. It is getting very late."

A few seconds passed, and then Viola, carefully wrapped up, was lowered into Kenneth's arms.

"Dear, dear Kenneth," murmured the young girl, clasping him tightly around the neck, and with the sudden rush of joy, swooning.

"Dear Viola!" responded the manly youth, as he pressed her to his bosom, and hurried across the clearing towards the hill.

Scipio was not slow in following his master's footsteps. Half way down the descent he caught up with Kenneth, whose progress—in consequence of his burden, and the care that was absolutely necessary to descend the hill—was slow.

"Did you hear any alarm, Scipio?" inquired Kenneth.

"Not a speck, Marster Egaton."

"That is well, now hasten on and prepare the boat. We are not entirely out of danger, for we may yet be missed, discovered, and pursued."

By the time Kenneth reached the beach, the negro

had the boat all in readiness. After carefully placing Viola in the bow, the two took their seats, and the boat was pushed off. By this time the storm had begun to ease up a trifle, but the waters of the river were exceedingly swollen and turbulent; and the sullen roar of the dam, which was not over a mile below that spot, sounded like the rumbling of distant thunder. And still Viola remained unconscious.

"The river is very much swollen," said Kenneth, as they pushed from the beach; "and the current sets towards the dam wildly. We will make right across the stream, Scipio, for even then we shall not, probably, touch the shore for a half a mile below this point; and that will bring us quite near enough to the dam, in its present condition, for our safety. Now pull away strongly."

At that moment the bells of the distant city pealed forth the hour of eleven.

"Eleben o'clock," said Scipio, as he bent to the oar.

"It is so," rejoined Kenneth. "Viola's uncle must surely have got back, or nearly so. Would we were on the other side. Pull away, Scipio."

Despite the strong strokes of Kenneth and the negro, the boat went down with the tide, much faster than it made across the stream. In consequence of the darkness, and the falling rain, and the mist arising from the river, it was almost impossible to dis-

cern objects more than a few feet distant. And every moment the roaring of the dam grew louder and more distinct.

"Hark!" cried Kenneth, suddenly. "Wasn't that the dipping of oars?"

"Fo' shu', Marster," rejoined Scipio; and both held up their oars while they listened. "Berry close, too."

"The sound comes from the east," continued Kenneth. "It cannot, therefore, be any one in pursuit of us."

Almost as he uttered these words, another row-boat, evidently making for the west side of the stream, shot close alongside of them; the bow of the one falling to the stern of the other, in which position both remained fixed; and, being entirely at the mercy of the tide, floated rapidly down the river.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE JESUIT, FERDINAND AND FATHER RENOUF ON THEIR WAY TO THE CITY.—THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRICK.—THE RETURN TO THE OLD MANSION HOUSE.—CROSSING THE SCHUYLKILL.—COLLISION BETWEEN THE BOATS.

Now let us go back a little.

The distance from the old mansion house to the first bridge that crossed the river Schuylkill—an enclosed wooden structure which was afterwards destroyed by fire, and replaced by an elegant and substantial open wire bridge—was, by a direct line, about a mile; but by the usual sinuous path it was full half as much again; consequently Torillo and the others were some time in reaching even that point, their progress being also much impeded by the darkness of the night, and the bad condition of the road. Before they reached the bridge the rain had begun to pour down, and many and various were the imprecations which they unsparingly bestowed upon the weather and the road.

When at length they found themselves beneath the

roof of the bridge, they stopped and shook the water from their clothing. By that time they were neither of them in a very enviable condition of mind.

"Hadn't we better turn back?" inquired the priest, addressing Torillo. "This is an unusually heavy storm; and, no doubt, it will continue for some time. We are already drenched through. If you don't go to-night, the writer of that note, if he is really in earnest, will, doubtless, seek some other occasion, or some other way, to communicate his business."

"Now, by the Virgin, priest, the storm but quickens my determination!" exclaimed Torillo, stubbornly.

"But may we not be neglecting more important matters in following this chase?" asked Ferdinand, with every show of respect; for, while he was anxious to turn back, he yet feared, at that time, to cross any of his father's whims.

"Have I not waited long years?" responded Torillo, savagely. "Then can I not wait a few hours longer, if need be?"

"But is it not imprudent to leave home under such circumstances?" continued the priest; his opposition arising as much from his dislike for the trouble, as any hope of gain. "You know not what might occur during your absence."

Still Torillo persevered—inexorable destiny relentlessly driving him onward. And that the opposition

which his son and the priest manifested but set his purpose more unwaveringly there is no doubt.

"Peace, with all this croaking!" he cried, in reply to the priest. "Everything is safe at the house, and will keep so until we return. Why, what fools you are to be surmising so much danger! Where can it come from? But enough of this! If you go with me, come on!—if you do not, go back! I care but little!"

Again Torillo started quickly forward, and in a few moments the outline of his form was lost in the darkness of the bridge.

"Curse it!" muttered Ferdinand. "I suppose we must follow him!"

"Better!" responded the priest; and the two then started forward.

At the east end of the bridge Torillo hailed a hack that happened to be standing there; and, after giving the driver directions to convey him to —— Hotel, jumped in. The next moment Ferdinand and the priest came up, and, without uttering a word, also leaped into the vehicle.

"Drive on, there!" shouted Torillo; and the next moment the hack was in motion.

From the bridge to —— Hotel—which was in the very heart of the city—was near about two miles; and owing to the rain, which now beat down furiously, the driver—whose horses, as is generally the case,

were miserable, worn-out animals—made but slow progress. He cursed, and cracked his whip to no effect, for the poor brutes were doing their best. In time, however, they reached the hotel, and the three men alighted. Torillo led the way up the marble steps, and into the building. Hailing a white jacketted domestic, he demanded to be shown to Mr. Albert Summerfield's room, for, strange as it may seem, considering the character of the man, and his familiarity with tricks and schemes, he did not believe the letter to be a cheat; or rather was blind to its true design.

"Who, sir?" queried the man addressed.

"Mr. Albert Summerfield," Torillo repeated, impatiently.

"Don't know him, sir. Better inquire at the desk," continued the man, pointing to the corner occupied by the book-keeper, and then turning away.

Torillo strode across the room to the place designated.

"I am inquiring for Mr. Albert Summerfield," he said.

The book-keeper ran his eye over the volume containing the list of arrivals, and then said—

"There is no such person staying here, sir."

"Why, sir, I have an appointment to call upon him at this hotel!" continued Torillo, holding forth the letter, and pointing to it; loth to believe that he

had been misled, though the truth was beginning to dawn on his mind.

"Well, sir, there is the book, and you may see for yourself that there is no such name registered in it."

The man turned away to attend to another person who had come up in the mean time; and Torillo bent over the book, and began to peruse the list of arrivals.

Ferdinand and the priest had dropped into seats some little distance off; and the former now whispered to the latter—

"Did your reverence hear that?"

"I did," rejoined the priest, with a meaning shake of the head.

"There's no such person staying here, it seems."

"After all the letter turns out to be a decoy. Just as I thought, however, though what prompted the feeling, I can't say. But who, think you, can be the writer? and what can be his design?"

"I cannot imagine," responded Ferdinand. "But I fear that it is in some way connected with Viola. Let us speak to the old man, and urge our return to the house, at once."

Before the sound of Ferdinand's voice had died away, Torillo uttered a loud, sharp cry—to the astonishment of all present—and wildly rushed from the room. Ferdinand and the priest exchanged a wondering glance, and quickly followed after him.

The cause of Torillo's alarm may be speedily explained. In conning over the list of arrivals he had at length come to the following :—

Lieut. Kenneth Egerton, U. S. Navy.

"Ho, driver!" he shouted, as he emerged into the air, to the hackman who was still standing in front of the hotel.

"On hand, yer honor!" responded the man, as he dashed down the steps of his vehicle.

"Back again to where you took us up! and, fast! fast! fast!" Torillo ejaculated vehemently, at the some moment leaping into the hack.

Almost at the same time, Ferdinand and the priest came running down the steps.

"In! in! in!" cried Torillo, in a hoarse whisper. "The fiend is abroad, and there's danger afoot!"

Astonished and puzzled, Ferdinand and the priest instantly complied.

Directly the vehicle was rattling along in a northwesterly direction.

Before either Ferdinand or the priest could utter a word of inquiry, Torillo hissed out—

"Can the grave give back its dead?"

"What do you mean, father, by such a question?" demanded Ferdinand, ill-naturedly. "And what's the matter with you, that you act in such a maniacal manner?"

"Can the grave give back its dead, I ask?" Torillo repeated, intensely.

"No!" uttered both Ferdinand and the priest, in the same breath.

"A lie!" shouted Torillo, his countenance working with the most dreadful emotion. "A lie! a lie!—for *he* has come back to blast me—*he* has cast off the sod, and arisen from the grave. Already I feel his iron hands about my throat—already I hear his voice yelling in my ear, 'Retribution! Retribution!'"

There was a moment's pause, during which Torillo writhed and twisted like one possessed. Then his disordered brain conjured up another source of fear, and he continued—

"Will *she*, too, come back, to bear witness against me? Holy Mother, another voice cries in my ear, 'Retribution! Retribution!' It is her's! it is my wife's! And here are more! more! more! glaring on me with their livid faces!"

"What, in the Virgin's name, ails you?" cried Ferdinand, seizing his father by the arm, and shaking him roughly. "You talk like either a fool or a madman!"

"Off, boy, off!—there are hands enough already upon me!" and Torillo shook himself loose from the grasp of his son. "Look you, Ferdinand!" he continued, wildly;—"I say the grave gives back its dead; and Marie Sempler will yet come and

shout in *your* ear, "Retribution! Retribution!' The grave don't hold people any more, I say, for *he* has come back;—and so will *she*, and murdered Marie!"

"Peace, peace, you old fool!" shouted Ferdinand, beside himself with the fearful thoughts which his father's words had conjured up. "Let the past rest undisturbed, or, by the Holy Virgin, I'll send you to keep Marie company!" and with the grip of a desperate man, he clutched his father by the throat. Torillo, too, with all the fury of a madman, seized his son by the throat; and there was every prospect of a bloody and murderous scene. The terrible, uncompromising fiend, Remorse, was busy with the heart-strings of both.

"Are you both mad?" cried the priest, suddenly; by a desperate effort separating the half crazy, bloodthirsty men. "By the mass, if there is danger, this is no way to meet it! Have you lost your wits, both of you?"

There was a momentary lull in the storm of raging passions; and then the priest, fixing his gaze upon Torillo, demanded, quickly and anxiously,—

"What is this that you are raving about? Who has come back?"

"The accursed heretic—Viola's lover!" responded Torillo, yelling the words out in the most frantical manner.

"How do you know this, Pedro? Was his name

among the list of arrivals?" continued the priest, the only cool-headed one among the party.

"It was!" rejoined Torillo, clutching the priest by the arm, and still speaking wildly. "I saw it with my own eyes; and yet I could have sworn that I stabbed him to the heart—that I saw him die. Even now I can see his ghastly face—can hear his voice as he cried, 'I am murdered! I am murdered!'"

"Is it so? Then there is trouble brewing!" said the priest, speaking quickly, but coolly. "If that man lives, it is but reasonable to suppose that he will soon denounce you, if he has got, or can get, any clue to your identity. But *this* is no way to meet danger! Have you forgotten yourself? Shall a good and faithful servant of the Holy Church like you, fear one heretic, or even a thousand of them, when so many ways are open to circumvent them? Are not we powerful? And cannot we save as well as punish? Away with these idle fantasies and be yourself! All is not yet lost!"

The appeal of the confident priest had its desired effect upon Torillo, whose livid face began gradually to assume its usual expression.

During this time Ferdinand had remained buried in the corner, gloomy and sullen. The priest, after a moment's pause, turned from Torillo to him, and said,—

"And you, too, Ferdinand, for shame! By the Im-

maculate Virgin! will you also let the phantoms of an idle fear paralyze your efforts, when union and strength may be most needed to retain a rich prize, and save yourselves from the iron grip of the law? It is well I did come along, or, like madmen, you would have run your necks into the hangman's noose, or cut your own throats. I never before knew either of you to act so much like fools!"

Torillo and Ferdinand had gradually cooled down, and now were more like themselves.

"But what means your reverence?" they demanded, eagerly, and in the same breath.

"Mean!" responded the priest, with every show of astonishment; "mean! What a question! Have your wits indeed flown? Has it not struck either of you that this has been but a plot to draw you away from the house, while some attempt was made to rescue Viola? Have you, Ferdinand, forgotten entirely the fear you expressed while in the hotel?"

"I begin to see now!" muttered Ferdinand, working his fingers with excitement. "Other thoughts, for a time, drove it out of my mind. Curse upon the chance that took us all away from the house!"

"It's all plain!" joined in Torillo, bitterly. "Fool that I was to fall so easily in the trap! Never before was I so duped! But we must redeem the past. All may not yet be lost. The house is well watched, and we may yet be in time to prevent Viola's escape.

If so, we will silence her tongue at once—without a moment's delay—and then look to the money and our own safety."

"But should Viola escape from the house," responded Ferdinand, "we shall not only lose a rich prize, but, by the Virgin Mother! we shall stand in the greatest personal danger. She knows that now which we were fools to let her ever get acquainted with. What a witness she would be against us!"

"O, if I but had her here!" muttered Torillo, fiendishly; "if I but had her here"—and his fingers worked with the dark thought—"I'd quickly put her beyond the chance of doing anybody harm."

"Whatever may be the position of matters at the house," remarked the priest, "it won't do for this part of the world to know you much longer. If Viola has escaped, she will, no doubt, after what has passed, inform upon you; if, on the contrary, she has not escaped, there is yet, unfortunately for you, that young sailor to fear. Both ways there is trouble ahead. You must leave here for awhile, at least."

At that moment the vehicle stopped, and the next the driver opened the door, and inquired which road he should take.

"Where are we?" demanded Torillo.

"At the bridge, ye'r honor!"

"Then drive over and follow the road until we

give you further directions. And, mark you, drive fast! fast! You shall be well paid."

"All right, ye'r honor," said the man, as he quickly proceeded to close the door.

"Stop!" cried Ferdinand, suddenly, to the driver; and the man paused, with the door nearly shut. Then turning to his father, he continued,—"By the road we shall only lose time. I wonder that you thought not of it!"

"Which way shall we take, then?" demanded Torillo, impatiently.

"It will be a much quicker way to cross the river from a point opposite the house. I know where a boat may easily be found."

"Any way, though it be through purgatory, so we reach there quickly!"

"But the river must be much swollen by this heavy rain; and the current is, doubtless, running down strongly. It will be a dangerous experiment, I forewarn you. Hark! how the water roars over the dam," remarked the less reckless priest.

"Neither the river nor the dam has any terror for me!" cried Torillo. "The risk of encountering them is nothing to the chance of catching Viola. I would face the devil himself ere I'd lose her!"

"As you will," rejoined the priest, half angrily. "Listen to no advice, but follow your own headstrong

way. I shall, however, take the usual road. No doubt I shall reach the house as soon as you do."

"A good suggestion, your reverence," remarked Ferdinand, who was now much cooler than might have been expected. "By taking the highway to the house, you may probably render us some assistance. We none of us know what has happened; and should a rescue have been accomplished, you might meet the runaways on the road, and so put us on the scent. Away now, and look sharp!" Then turning to the driver, who stood with eyes and mouth agape, wondering what it all meant, he added,—"And now, driver, take the road, and keep up along the shore until we tell you to stop; and drive just as fast as you can."

The priest had now alighted; and as Ferdinand ceased speaking, the driver closed the door, remounted his box, and drove off.

And still the rain continued pouring down, and the river roared; and occasionally the booming thunder reverberated far and near; and the vivid lightning lit up all the surrounding scene.

As the carriage drove rapidly away, the priest turned into the bridge, cursing at the madness of the others in attempting to cross the swollen and turbulent river.

At a point nearly opposite the old mansion house, Ferdinand, who was on the *qui vive*, stopped the

carriage and alighted, followed quickly by his father. The hackman was then paid and discharged; and, as the man turned off and retraced the path he had come, Ferdinand and Torillo—the former leading—started swiftly down toward the beach.

A boat was soon found; and, amid the pelting rain, the two men pushed off into the rushing stream, which, as with Kenneth and Scipio, carried them down much faster than they made across.

Just as they pushed out the clock of the city struck eleven.

"Eleven o'clock," muttered Torillo, bending to the oars. "The hour is getting late."

"The more reason to pull hard," responded Ferdinand. "At the best, we shall make but slow work against this tide. Pull hard, now, father, or, by the Virgin! it will be difficult to tell where we shall land."

Some time now passed in silence, or was broken only by muttered curses; when at length Torillo—whose quick ear had caught the sound of an approaching boat—exclaimed suddenly,—

"There is a boat drawing near us! Hold up your oars and listen!"

Another brief period of silence ensued.

"There is that!" responded Ferdinand, whose ear had now also caught the dipping of oars. "It is

coming from the other side. It nears us fast, too. Who can it be?"

The next moment the two boats ran together, side to side, as we have already described.

Both boats being now at the mercy of the tide, they immediately swung round, by the movement bringing the bow of the boat just referred to up stream, and the bow of the other down.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE RENCOUNTER ON THE SCHUYLKILL.—THE STRUGGLE.—GOING OVER THE DAM.—DEATH OF THE JESUIT AND FERDINAND.—ESCAPE OF VIOLA, KENNETH AND SCIPIO.

As the boats swung round—which was almost at the same moment that they scraped together—a bright flash of lightning illuminated the whole scene, revealing their position to each of the parties.

During that instant the four men had caught a quick glimpse of each other.

"'Tis he!" yelled Torillo, dropping his oars, and springing to his feet.

"Who?" shouted back Ferdinand, also springing up.

"Viola's lover!" screamed Torillo, with all the wildness of a maniac.

"Torillo!" shouted Kenneth, as he too leaped to his feet.

"My uncle!" cried Viola, who at this moment revived and raised herself half up.

"De high golly, yere's a go!" joined in the negro, opening his eyes to their fullest capacity.

The utterance of all these varied expressions had not occupied a minute. With lightning rapidity they had fallen from the lips of those five strangely, fearfully situated beings. Following them was a moment of deep and intense silence; and then another vivid flash of lightning, accompanied by a deafening peal of heaven's artillery, again illuminated the whole scene, and revealed them all glaring wildly, though from different emotions, at each other.

And all the while the rain beat down heavily, and the mad spirits of the river yelled furiously.

And all the while, too, the boats were drifting down, down, down towards the roaring dam.

"Accursed heretic, you are foiled!" again screamed Torillo. "By the Holy Virgin, you shall not now escape me!"

"Murdering papist!" shouted back Kenneth, desperate with the exigency of his situation; "that God who has prospered me thus far will not desert me now!"

And then the two men, with a simultaneous movement, caught each other by the throat.

"Quick, Ferdinand, seize the girl!" cried Torillo, tightening his grasp upon Kenneth.

"Scipio!" shouted Kenneth, madly.

Quick as was Ferdinand's spring towards Viola, the watchful negro was by her side first. Clutching his antagonist by the throat, Scipio cried out—

"Not 'xactly, you funnel tief! I'se yere, I is!"

Ferdinand now seized hold of the negro, and thus firmly grappled together the four men stood.

"Draw, Ferdinand, draw!" shouted Torillo, furious at the opposition which they met. "Kill the accursed hounds—kill them!"

The next moment all four of the men had drawn their keen, glittering knives; and for Kenneth and Scipio it was fortunate that Torillo and his son were not provided with weapons of a more fatal description. As it was, they stood nearly, or quite, upon an equality.

And then commenced a struggle which baffles all description. All four of the men were athletic and powerful, and pretty equally matched as to physical strength; and, with the exception of Scipio, tolerably well versed in the science of defence. And what the negro lacked in art, nature fully balanced. For a time they tugged, and aimed, and warded—Kenneth and Scipio acting only on the defensive—without inflicting any injury on each other, more than some slight scratches, and without altering their relative positions.

And still the rain poured down; and the thunder bellowed; and the red lightning flashed, playing in jets around their polished and glittering blades. And still the river roared, and the boats floated faster and faster, and nearer and nearer, to the wild-

ly rushing dam. And yet those four men—so entirely absorbed were they by the rencounter—saw it not—realized it not. The unbounded surprise of the meeting, together with the events which quickly followed, seemed to have driven from their minds all recollection of their position. And all the while Viola lay crouched down in the bow of Kenneth's boat, with breathless interest, watching the fierce struggle. And she, too, was so bound up in the conflict that she had no thought for anything else.

And still the fight continued, the men alternately swaying backwards and forwards. And while Ferdinand and Torillo cursed and blasphemed, and ground their teeth with impotent fury, and called upon the Holy Virgin, Kenneth and Scipio encouraged each other by many a cheering exclamation.

And still the rushing tide swept the boats onward, onward.

"Curses on you, take that!" yelled Torillo, aiming a powerful blow at Kenneth's heart.

"Not yet! my hour has not yet come!" responded Kenneth, adroitly fending off the descending blow.

At the same moment Ferdinand struck wildly at the negro, shouting as he did so—

"Dog of a slave, die!"

"Not 'xactly, you funnel willin!" responded Scipio, receiving the blow aimed at his heart upon his mus-

cular arm. Then twisting his head slightly round towards Kenneth, he continued—

"Marster Egaton, ef we don't stick dese yere fellers, dey'll do us some mischief, mine I tell ye."

Almost in the same instant, Violo—whose attention had been for the first time attracted ahead—uttered a loud, piercing, and fearful shriek.

"The dam! the dam!" she cried, frantically.

And there within, probably, fifty yards of them, was the rushing, roaring, tumbling waters.

At the sound of Viola's voice, Kenneth and Scipio turned their gaze down the stream. In that unguarded moment, Torillo and Ferdinand, who were too intent upon the gratification of their passions to heed anything else, by a powerful and sudden movement, jerked Viola's rescuers from their own boat into the one which they themselves occupied.

The boat, relieved of the weight of Kenneth and the negro, and now entirely freed from the other, shot down the stream with frightful velocity.

Kenneth and Scipio looked on astounded; and so intently were the thoughts of all drawn upon Viola that they unconsciously relaxed their grasp of each other.

"Ha! ha! ha!" screamed Torillo, fearfully; in the gratification of his hatred, blind to his own impending fate. "Accursed heretic!" he continued, turning towards Kenneth—"it is your turn now."

But the murderer's arm was stayed.

In that instant a loud and fearful shriek again rose clear and high above the din of the storm, and the roar of the waters; and then a vivid flash of lightning revealed Viola standing erect in the bow of the boat, and gazing forward at the dam.

"Merciful Heaven! lost! lost! lost!" cried Kenneth, in tones of deadly agony. "But if I cannot save you, Viola, I will die with you!"

There was a plunge, and Kenneth disappeared beneath the rushing waters.

"Well, it's 'funnel hard, but I won't 'zert Marster, no how!" cried Scipio, plunging in after Kenneth.

In that moment Torillo and Ferdinand were suddenly, and fully, aroused to a sense of their great danger.

"Father!" cried Ferdinand, in a voice husky with terror, "the dam! the dam! We shall be dashed to pieces over the dam!"

"To the oars, boy, to the oars!" returned Torillo, now white with fear. "Pull back! back!"

Notwithstanding they pulled with all the miraculous strength of desperation, they made no headway against the onward rushing waters; the tide near the dam being then too strong to resist. Down, down, down went their boat, despite all their efforts to the contrary.

As they neared the dam, and became fully, though

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unwillingly, convinced of their inevitable, unescapable fate, the miserable men, paralyzed by fear, relaxed all their efforts, and fell upon their knees, calling frantically upon the Holy Virgin to help them, and save them. All, all in vain, however.

Kenneth arose to the surface of the waters a considerable distance below where he plunged in; and Scipio's head appeared almost at the same moment, and nearly at the same point.

"I'se yere, Marster Egaton, I'se yere!" cried Scipio, spurting the water from his mouth.

"The boat, Scipio, the boat!" shouted back Kenneth. "For God's sake, after it! after it!"

Both Kenneth and the negro struck out vigorously, and aided by the rushing waters, they dashed along at a rapid rate. In a few seconds they touched the stern of the boat, and by a quick and powerful effort succeeded in throwing themselves into it. At the same instant a bright flash of lightning revealed their position to them. The boat was, for the instant, poised upon the extreme edge of the dam, and Viola, the very impersonation of terror, was still standing erect in the bow. Kenneth saw all, and he shouted with wild volubility,—

"Down, Viola, down! Clasp the boat tightly, and hold on for your life! Now, Scipio, steadily and firmly," he continued to the negro; and as he spoke

the boat shot over the dam into the boiling waters beneath.

Just as they went over, the boat containing Torillo and Ferdinand shot to the edge of the dam, remained for a moment stationary, and then dashed over; but not being balanced, as the other had been, it was almost instantly engulfed in the foaming vortex.

The boat in which was Viola and her preservers swayed and trembled violently with the plunge, instantly almost filling with water. For a moment its destruction seemed inevitable. But so well had Kenneth and the negro trimmed the little craft that it finally shot clear of the tumbling waters.

"Thank God, we are safe!" cried out Kenneth, earnestly. "Dear Viola, are you alive?" he continued, addressing the young girl.

There was no answer; and with a quick beating at the heart he hastened to the bow of the boat, where Viola lay buried in water.

"She has fainted," he murmured, as he stooped down, and felt her warm breath upon his cheek. "What a night for one so tender!"

"But, Marster Egaton, de boat am swamping!" Scipio exclaimed, suddenly. "Golly, we shall be drownded yet."

"I will take the oars, which, fortunately, are still safe, and row for the shore, while you bail," respond-

ed Kenneth, quickly, at the same time drawing up the oars from the bottom of the boat, and fixing them in the row-locks. "Be lively now, and we shall yet escape."

Both Kenneth and Scipio set to work with a will; though the latter had nothing but his brawny hands with which to scoop out the water.

Almost before the last words had passed Kenneth's lips, an empty boat shot swiftly past them.

"Dar goes tudder boat, Marster Egaton," said Scipio.

"Yes; and empty, too," responded Kenneth. "The miserable men have met their fate."

At the same moment the attention of Kenneth and Scipio was attracted towards the boiling waters of the dam. Two forms, which a bright flash of lightning revealed distinctly, shot up suddenly out of the water; and then two successive shrieks of the wildest agony and terror, mingled with the din of the storm, and the roar of the waters. And then they disappeared, and were seen and heard no more. It was the last dying effort of Torillo, and his son, Ferdinand.

"They have perished," murmured Kenneth, again plying the oars, which, for a moment, he had permitted to remain idle. "God have mercy upon them."

"De high golly, Marster Egaton, didn't dey holler?" said Scipio, as again he commenced to ladle out the water.

By hard and incessant labor, Kenneth and Scipio managed at last to bring the boat ashore. And though themselves almost exhausted, strong and muscular as they were, their first thought was yet of Viola, who still continued in a state of unconsciousness. Lifting her gently and carefully from the boat, they quickly bore her to an Inn, which, very fortunately, was not far distant. There the proper remedies were applied; and Kenneth had soon the unspeakable pleasure of hearing the young girl utter his name. And with the knowledge of her safety, his full heart overflowed with gratitude and thanksgiving.

As may very naturally be inferred, the danger which they had escaped excited the most unbounded curiosity, and the warmest sympathy. Manifold were the questions with which Kenneth was taxed, to all of which he answered—not deeming it either necessary or advisable to enter into further particulars—that in crossing the river they had encountered another boat containing two men, and both had gone over the dam about the same time.

The following morning, Kenneth and Viola—the latter being sufficiently recovered to be removed—accompanied by Scipio, quitted the scene of their thrilling adventure; and some time after the bodies of Torillo and Ferdinand were washed ashore at a point considerably below the dam. A rumor of the

occurrence, distorted and tortured into every conceivable shape, soon spread throughout the city. Among the first whose ear it reached was Father Renouf; and the priest immediately repaired to the Dead House and recognized the bodies; and a few days subsequently had them interred, with all the rites of the Church, in one of the Catholic burying grounds of the city.

That the affair bore a suspicious look, and called for an investigation, was unquestionable. Consequently, Kenneth, Viola, and Scipio, were summoned before the proper authorities; but a calm and impartial examination of the circumstances immediately established Kenneth's innocence, and secured the discharge of all the parties.

After the death of Torillo and his son—there being then no direct heir to the estate—the domestics attached to the old mansion disappeared, and the place was shut up. Thus it remained for a number of years, and gradually but surely it crumbled away, until it was nothing but a mass of ruins. Finally the buildings were razed to the ground; but at whose direction never transpired. And great was the wonder which people manifested at the numerous deep vaults that were discovered beneath the foundation of the old house; and many were the inquiries which were made as to what could possibly have been their design and use. But many could not tell; and those

who could, of course, would not. And greater still was the wonder and the excitement when among the ruins in the vaults a quantity of human bones were discovered; and though every possible inquiry was instituted, nothing could, even in the remotest manner, penetrate the mystery. But though nothing could be proven, people had their thoughts, and they were not backward in expressing them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TEN YEARS AFTER.—HAPPINESS.—VIOLA A WIFE AND MOTHER.—REMINISCENCES.

ONE more brief scene, reader; and with it we shall conclude this eventful history.

Some ten years have elapsed since Viola's double escape, and we would draw your attention to a handsome and spacious villa, situated upon the confines of one of the most beautiful inland towns in the State of Pennsylvania. Without and within, as the visitor at once acknowledged, it displayed every evidence of the wealth, the good taste, and the refinement of its occupants.

Upon a table in one of the elegantly arranged and sumptuously furnished apartments, on the lower floor, there was a small square glass case, containing a dead bird, stuffed; and around the neck of the bird was a dingy looking letter, fastened by a faded ribbon.

It was the twilight of a soft summer evening, and standing before the case, gazing at the bird, were two

persons. One of these was a negro, still in the prime of life; and the other a bright-eyed, raven-headed boy.

"Scipio," said the boy, addressing the negro, "what's the reason papa leaves that dirty looking letter tied around the bird's neck? I'm sure it don't add anything to the looks of the beautiful bird."

"Well, you see, Marster Ken," rejoined our old acquaintance, his eye brightening at the recollection,—"dar's an inte'sting story 'nected wid dat bird, an' dat 'pistle."

"Is there?" rejoined the boy. "Why I never heard it."

"Guess your farder fought you mos' too young, Marster Ken."

"Well, now, you come sit down and tell it to me!" urged the lad, attempting to draw the negro to a seat. "Had papa and mamma anything to do with it?"

"Dey had, fo' shu, Marster Ken. But I'd rudder not tell you de story, 'kase I dunno all de 'stances o' de 'fair. Ax your farder and mudder—p'rhaps dey will tell you."

At that moment the door of the room was opened, and a gentleman, in the full flush of a healthy and vigorous manhood, with a lovely, gentle looking woman leaning upon his left arm, and a sweet young girl, of six or seven summers, in his right hand, en-

tered the apartment. It was Kenneth Egerton, his wife Viola, and the youngest of their two children.

"Marster Ken want to hear de story o' dat dar bird," exclaimed Scipio, as the party entered the room; "an' I 'ferred him to you, Marster Egaton, for de 'tic'lars."

"A story about the bird!" cried the womanly little girl by Kenneth's side; "do tell it, papa."

Kenneth bent his eyes first upon the bird; and from the bird he looked to his sweet children; and from his children he turned his gaze down to the misty, uplifted eyes of his lovely and loving wife.

"Gratify them, dear Kenneth," murmured Viola, in low, soft, tremulous tones, as a memory of the long past welled up in her heart.

Kenneth bent his head and imprinted a soft kiss upon the brow of his wife; and then seating himself, he drew Viola and the children to his side, and prepared to recount the thrilling scenes of other days.

"May I stay yere, Marster Egaton?" inquired the negro, eagerly.

"Stay!" responded Kenneth, looking up, suddenly.

"Shu, Marster Egaton!"

"Don't ask me such a foolish question again, Scipio," continued Kenneth. "How often have I told you that the memory of the past linked us together, forever. In my house you are a privileged character.

Besides, what would the story be without you? Sit down."

The negro drew his huge hand across his eyes—for kindness always touches the human heart—and quietly crouched down upon a stool in a corner.

"Ah, Scipio," said Viola, smiling through her tears, "we can never pay you the half of what we owe you."

"Well, nebber mine de pay, Missus," responded Scipio, choking down his emotion. "Jest let us hear Marster Egaton tell de story agin; doe I can't say as I'se gotten much o' it."

Why prolong the happy scene? When Kenneth finished, there were tears of joy in the eyes of all. Turning to his wife and children, the husband and father folded them to his bosom in a long and fervent embrace, and *thank God!* fell from the trembling lips of both Kenneth and Viola.

A moment of silence ensued.

"Dar, Marster Ken, what you tink o' dat?" demanded Scipio, as soon as the lad was released from the embrace of his parents.

"I shall like the bird, now, more than ever," responded the boy, as he turned to the case.

"So you ourt'er, Marster Ken. Dat's so, now!"

"And more than the bird, Scipio, I shall like you."

"Well, nebber mind me, Marster Ken. I'd do as much agin fo' Marster an' Missus eny day. Dat's so!"

Upon this scene of unalloyed happiness, patient reader, we now drop the curtain; venturing the hope that you are each and all well satisfied with the fullness of joy, which, after her night of darkness, lighted the pathway of Viola, the Jesuit's Ward.